OUTLINES OF VEDANTA

by R. KRISHNASWAMI AIYAR

OUTLINES OF VEDANTA, in the words of the learned author himself, is 'a modest attempt to present the basic principles of the Vedanta in a language free of technicalities'.

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by

R. KRISHNASWAMI AIYAR

Foreword by

T. L. Venkatarama Aiyar

CHETANA
BOMBAY

By the same Author:

Dialogues with the Guru
The call of the Jagadguru
Sparks from a Divine Anvil
Thoughts from the Gita
The Eternal Law
The Saint of Sringeri
Stray Thoughts on Dharma
Rambles in Ramayana
Dakshinmurti Strotram
The Great Equation

FOREWORD

This is an extremely valuable publication on a theme which must be of eternal interest to mankind — the relationship of man and the universe to the Eternal. The learned author expounds the subject in accordance with the tenets of the Vedanta, in particular as interpreted by Sankaracharya. According to the Vedas there was, in the beginning, only the Supreme Being called Brahman. Then the thought came to It — when or why or how, it will be futile to speculate — "I shall become many". As a result, the five elements came into existence and then the animates, including man. Such is the story of the origin of the universe and it is thus narrated in this book:

> "The Vedanta says that the Supreme Being was alone, One without a second. The Secondless One who was pure consciousness devised to 'cognize', but there was nothing else but Himself; so He had to cognize Himself; in other words, He made Himself the object of His own cognition. In Sri Sankaracharya's inimitable words, 'The Highest Self who was pure consciousness looked at Himself as Himself and became therefore the I; from that arose the root of differentiation' *(Prabodhasudhakara,* 95). He desired to become the many. But as there was nothing beside Himself, He had to create the many out of Himself alone" (pp. 71-72).

Thus, according to the Upanishads the created things are all manifestations of the Supreme Being as it existed before

creation, or of the 'formless *Brahman*', as it is termed in Vedanta. From this three propositions follow:

(1) I, the Soul, am Brahman.

(2) All This is Brahman.

(3) Brahman, the essence of the soul, is identical with Brahman the essence of the All (p. 82).

This is what the Vedanta teaches and the main purpose of this work is to expound this concept and to show how it can be realized.

The first stage in this process, according to the author, is the knowledge of the distinction between a person and a thing (p. 88). A person is one who enjoys; a thing is one which is enjoyed. When we say that a person enjoys, who is it that really enjoys? Is it his flesh and bone that enjoy? No. They merely act on the urge of the senses. Therefore, it is the senses that enjoy and not the physical body, and accordingly the senses are the person and the body the thing. But then, it is the mind that moves the senses to action, and therefore the mind is the person and the senses the things in relation to it. Pursuing this line of reasoning, it is seen that it is the *Jivatma* or the soul that is the person and the rest of the creation, the *Prapancha,* is the thing. The next step in this process of realization is the perception that all things in essence are one and the same, even though they are different in names and forms. A table is different from a bench in name and form; but when once it is realized that they are both wood in different shapes, the sense of differentiation disappears. Following this line of thought, it will be seen that all things are merely different manifestations of the five elements in different names and forms. The stage is now

set for the realization of the concept of a first cause from which both the *Jivatma* and the *Prapancha* have emanated. The formless Brahman, or Supreme Being, which in its pre-manifestation stage was one and indivisible, omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent, and *Sat, Chit* and *Ananda,* became manifest as *Jivatma* and *Prapancha* when the thought came to It, "I shall be many." And when that egoism is destroyed there is only the formless *Brahman.* This knowledge, when realized, must inspire the feeling of oneness of *Jivatma* and *Prapancha* with the Supreme Being. But how is the concept to be realized? Not merely through experience, because that can only be through the senses, whose vision and capacity are alike limited. Nor by reasoning, for as the Upanishad says, "How can you know Him who is Himself the knower?" It is here that faith comes to our aid. Hence the importance of the Vedas.

The author next proceeds to examine whether *karma,* rituals, and *upasana,* religious worship, can help us in the realization of the Godhead within us. Rituals are important, he says, because they instil into the mind a sense of duty and of sacrifice, wean it away from attachment to Matter and divert it in the direction of the Spirit. The Sastric injunctions ordaining certain *karmas* and prohibiting others have the effect of regulating our desires and inducing in us a state of non-desire. This must help us to conquer *Avidya* and realize the oneness of the *Jivatma* with the *Paramatma. Upasana* again is very useful for it enables the devotee to realize that this universe is all only the manifestation of God. Each of the five elements can be regarded as a *Deva* in itself and an intense devotion to any one of them enables the devotee to reach the Supreme Being who has created it as well as the other elements. Just as an ant travelling across

one of the five fingers can reach the hand and then have a comprehensive view of all the fingers, so devotion to any one of the *Devas* will help in the realization that there is a Supreme Being behind, who is the *causa causans* of the whole *Prapancha*. Religion, says the author, is the handmaid of philosophy and the Hindu religion, both in its *karma-kanda* and *upasanakanda*, can be said to be Vedanta in action.

I have touched on some of the salient points dealt with in this book. The author, a well-known lawyer in the State of Madras, gave up a lucrative practice to devote himself to the study and exposition of Hindu religion and philosophy and he is well-qualified to write on the subject also, as one who is an ardent aspirant in the realization of it. His father, it may be mentioned, was likewise a leading lawyer who gave up his profession and became a *sanyasi*. This work is primarily intended for those earnest students of Vedanta who find themselves lost amidst its expansive regions, like the person referred to in the Chhandogya Upanishad, and it is sure to prove an admirable guide to them. It is simple and can be understood by all persons who have a mind to know, and it is not overloaded with technical terms or long and abstruse discussions. Illustrations are freely given which make the meaning clear beyond all doubt. To those sincere minds which have been thrown into a state of doubt and scepticism by the advance of science, this book will bring fresh faith, hope and happiness.

T. L. Venkatarama Aiyar

PREFACE

This is a modest attempt to present the basic principles of the Vedanta in a language fairly free from technicalities. That great philosophy, both in theory and in practice, is too wide and elaborate to admit of its being compressed within the short compass of this book, which aims only at a popular presentation of the subject. I have therefore confined myself to a consideration of the main principle of the absolute oneness of the Reality and contented myself with a bare enunciation of the means by which that truth can be realised.

I have no doubt that to such of my readers as have made a study of the Vedanta the presentation made here will seem quite elementary and meagre and capable of much improvement, both in matter and in manner. But I may mention that this work is mainly intended for those who have passed through the process of modern education, divorced as it is from our ancient Vedic culture, and are yet eager to know the basic principles of our philosophy. If it succeeds in interesting them and in making them seek closer acquaintance with the original works on the Vedanta, I shall consider my labour amply rewarded.

I must respectfully record here the deep debt of gratitude that I owe to my revered father Brahmasri G. Ramachandra Aiyar of the Tirunelveli Bar (later Sri Ramananda Sarasvati Svaminah) for the taste he infused in me from my boyhood for our philosophical religion and also for the careful training that he gave me in his natural desire to see me grow up a true Hindu. That I have not fulfilled all his

expectations cannot take away from the magnitude of my obligation to him. I may mention also that he was kind enough to go through and approve of this book while in manuscript.

I shall be failing in my duty if I do not also respectfully acknowledge my indebtedness to the late Mahopadesaka Brahmasri S. Rajavallabha Sastrinah of the Tirunelveli Hindu College, but for whose lucid exposition the Advaita literature would have remained inaccessible to me.

This work is a revised and enlarged edition of my "Thoughts from the Vedanta", which was published many years ago and is now out of print. Messrs Chetana Ltd., of Bombay, well-known publishers of philosophical literature, approached me to revise the book and allow them to publish it under the new title "Outlines of Vedanta". I am grateful to them for the neat and attractive form in which they have brought out this edition.

R. Krishnaswami Aiyar.

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CHAPTER I

THE GOAL OF LIFE

1. NATURE OF THE GOAL

All activity in the universe, of man and of every other living being, if analysed, will be found to have for its object one of these three:- *to be, to know, and to be happy.* A little more thought will make clear to us that the ambition of all thinking beings is to exist *always* and *everywhere,* to know *always* and *all things* and to be happy always and *under all conditions;* that is, their aim is to realise the ambition of existence, knowledge and happiness *absolutely,* unlimited by any restrictions of time or space. Is this ambition legitimate or practically attainable? It would seem so, for we have in us the seeds for realising this ambition in its entirety. These seeds are to be found in the instinctive abhorrence of death, ignorance and misery. The instinct for preservation of life and for repulsion of anything likely to threaten life is well known to be universal. There is not a fool in the whole world who would like to be called a fool or who does not think some others to be fools. That happiness is the goal of all and pain is by all instinctively hated needs no demonstration. These instincts, ingrained in all living beings, cannot be explained on any other hypothesis than that of the three characteristics of existence, knowledge and happiness being essential to the very nature of conscious life.

But man, being endowed with the faculty of transcending mere instinct and of looking forward to the goal of life, should certainly use this faculty in helping that instinct by making determined attempts to reach the goal as early as possible. Unfortunately however, man, the ordinary man, has always had a tendency to be satisfied with the present and to ignore the future. He has been so, not because he does not want to reach the ultimate goal, but because he often falls into the error that that goal is no other than the attainment of happiness, howsoever inadequate, in the immediate present. It should therefore be the endeavour of all knowing men to get rid of this false idea of the importance of the immediate present relative to the actual goal of life. This, again, they can do only if they have a proper conception of that goal. That goal is, as mentioned above, the attainment of a perfect state of existence, knowledge and happiness, untrammelled by any kind of limitation, the supreme state of God Himself. The very idea of such a state will seem impossible to us, accustomed as we are to think of everything in terms of limitation. Even the philosopher in most cases is unable to grasp it. The Bhakta or devotee of God is in most cases afraid to admit the possibility of such a state, for it seems to him profanation for a man to aspire to have the very characteristics of God Himself. It is therefore left to the Advaita Vedantin alone to boldly proclaim the great truths revealed in the Vedas that everything in the universe, organic or inorganic, conscious or unconscious, is in its essense but God, that our final goal is the realisation of our absolute oneness with Him, and that the perception of identity between oneself and God is the highest form of devotional worship.

2. Person, Thing and the Supreme Entity

The whole of creation will be found to consist of entities which are either *persons* or *things*.[1] A *person*, if analysed, will be found to have three inseparable characteristics:- He *is, he knows,* he *enjoys*. A *thing*, similarly analysed, will be found to have also three essential characteristics:- It *is*, it *is known*, it *is enjoyed*.[2] The common characteristic therefore of a *person* and of a *thing* is that he or it *is*. The Vedanta teaches us the existence of a third entity which transcends and comprehends all creation and whose characteristics therefore are that it *is, it knows and is known, enjoys and is enjoyed*. Such a third entity is God or Brahman.[3] It will be clear that, if there is such a comprehensive

---

1. Instead of using the words 'persons' and 'things' to signify what we mean, we could have employed the words 'organic' and 'inorganic', 'conscious' and 'unconscious', 'subject and object', etc; but we prefer the words 'persons' and 'things', as there are ideas associated with the other expressions which we want to exclude from the conceptions that we have to place before the reader; and further the two selected words are in our opinion more adapted to convey directly our meaning. As may be seen from the characteristics of a person that we shall mention presently, it will be correct to call him a 'perceiver', an 'enjoyer' or 'experiencer', using the corresponding passive names for a thing. But it has to be noted that these expressions do not connote the person in his entirety but only embody single characteristics of his. We want it therefore to be understood that even if we sometimes use these limited terms we mean only the person or the thing as the case may be and not simply any limited aspect of them.

2 It may seem at the outset that, by using the word 'enjoy', we accord no place to pain and suffering in our analysis of the universe. Though we shall have occasion to show later on that, arising as they do, from a sense of imperfectness pain and suffering form no essential element either of the person or of the thing, It will be sufficient for the present to take the word 'enjoy' as used in the general sense of 'experience'.

3. Because the word 'God', in ordinary parlance, connotes a 'personality', ever so supreme and transcendent, it is safe to use the word 'Brahman' to signify that Transcendent Being Who is strictly impersonal, as will be seen later on.

entity, a *person* is but a limited aspect of that entity and a *thing* is but another limited aspect of the same entity. A *person* is not therefore essentially different from that entity; nor can a *thing* be essentially different from it. The Advaitin therefore may well say that every living being is Brahman Itself and that every *thing* also is equally Brahman Itself. But a *person* cannot be a *thing* as they are two *distinct* aspects which bear severally distinct sets of attributes. When we reach the stage where we can realise the existence of that third entity which transcends the aspects, the aspects will cease to have any significance for us. It is from that stage that the Vedantic teaching "The universe is unreal" is given, not for us to whom the aspects are all in all. Again from the same viewpoint it is given out that a *person* is not different from that Supreme Entity, not for us to whom the *person* seems to be an object of everyday direct experience while the third entity is but a thing of doubtful hearsay. It is usual to say that the whole of the philosophy of the Upanishads can be compendiously expressed in half a stanza: "Brahman is real, the universe is unreal, the Soul is but Brahman Itself and none other." But by learning this half-stanza we are as near to understanding our philosophy as the mere hearing of the equally compendious teaching "That thou art" takes us near to Liberation or Moksha. It may be that expressions like these are of great use as mnemonics to persons who have mastered the teachings of our sacred literature; but they are practically useless to us at present.

3. Necessity for Right Understanding

It may be legitimately asked why we should trouble our heads about these teachings if they are not for us. In fact, as at present situated we need not, and strictly speaking we should not, trouble ourselves. But unfortunately

these teachings, which were treasured as the highest and sublimest of truths reserved to be imparted only to the qualified and the tested, are now thrown broadcast so that they have become the common property of the worst sinner and the noblest saint. The Vedantin cannot dispute the accuracy of these teachings even though repeated by others than himself, and he has to be on the defensive to repel any false or mischievous interpretation that may be attempted to be thrown on them. Sri Krishna in insisting upon the duty of Arjuna to fight asks him to remember that by killing others he can incur no sin. A murderer may also quote this passage to show that he can incur no sin by killing another. It is the duty therefore of every true devotee of Sri Krishna to refute such a mischievous perversion and define the exact context in which He gave the teaching and the exact import of His words. Similarly therefore it falls to the duty of a true Vedantin to refute any false significance that may be attributed by others to his teachings. The standpoint from which the teachings are given must be considered well. Otherwise, the teachings are likely to be misunderstood. A student studying in lower classes is taught the definition of parallel lines as lines which, produced ever so far both ways, *do not meet;* and on the basis of this definition he is taught to understand and solve many problems. The advanced student of geometry will be taught that parallel lines are lines which, produced, *do meet* at infinity. The latter teaching will be accurate and intelligible only if the student has some conception of infinity. If this teaching is given to the lower class student, who cannot conceive of infinity, it will not only produce in him no impression, but will also make him lose faith in the accuracy of the teaching already imparted to him, that parallel lines never meet, and thus effectively prevent him from pursuing the courses

of studies which are necessary preliminary steps towards understanding the higher truth, that parallel lines *do meet.* It is to avoid such mischievous use of higher teachings and to minimise the value of the lower that our Sastras are very particular about the qualifications of the aspiring student.

4. Misconception

If we may say so, the criticisms that have been urged against Advaitins like Sri Sankaracharya are most of them due to the want of sufficient understanding or patience to ascertain from their writings themselves the standpoint and the import of the statements criticised. As soon as the great Acharya says that the world is *Mithya,* his critics conclude that he meant that the world was non-existent and attack this assumed conclusion of his by all sorts of arguments. We have heard it seriously urged: "According to you, the world is non-existent. Yourself and your teaching are part of the world. You and your teaching are therefore non-existent." The logic of this argument is perfect; only the basic assumption that according to the Advaitin the world is non-existent is not true: and, even supposing that he does mean it, that teaching is not for us as we are. If the critics had but more patience, they would have taken the trouble to learn from Sri Sankaracharya himself what he means by Mithya; for the Acharya with an extraordinary carefulness and foresight has taken scrupulous pains to define the significance of the word as used by him. The truths embodied in this and similar statements have reference only to the highest or ultimate ideal to be striven after by all of us and to be actually realised in experience *only at the end* of our course of training. They have no reference to our immediate aims, nor are we promised immediate full understanding of those truths. By exposing those ultimate truths to the gaze of the passer-by, we have done a great

disservice to the cause of humanity. We have placed before the people an ideal which they cannot easily comprehend, much less attain. The result is that ordinary minds turn away from it and deduce the impossibility of the ideal from their own incompetence to realise it, and others hanker after the ideal, ignoring the various intermediate stages which the aspirant has necessarily to pass through before he can reach it. Suppose I am told that Kasi is a very holy city which every Hindu should visit. I may not have the money or the physical strength to undertake the costly and arduous journey. Can I at once conclude that Kasi cannot exist, except in the imagination of poor deluded fools? Or, again, I may believe in the existence of Kasi and may long to be there. I am told that I must take the train for Kasi. Suppose now I go to the railway station and I ask the guard where the train at the platform will take me to. Most probably he will answer "To Madras", without caring to explain that the route to Kasi is *via* Madras, where I will get another train. What will one think of my intelligence if I refuse to take that train, because my destination is Kasi and not Madras? Such is the case of the people who would like to have the highest bliss of the Self, promised in the Upanishads, but would refuse to undergo the trainings in Karma and Upasana as preparatory steps towards the attainment of that bliss. This refusal to undergo the preliminary training can only be attributed to the want of necessary faith in the possibility of attaining that bliss and also in the competency of the means prescribed in the Sastras, for the modern has an instinctive aversion even to the word 'faith'. As a 'reasoning' animal, he has the greatest contempt for those who are simple enough to believe without 'proof'. But what is 'proof'? We shall do well to consider this question before we proceed further.

CHAPTER II

EXPERIENCE AND REASONING

1. PROOFS, WHAT THEY ARE

By *proof* is meant the means by which the existence of the thing sought to be proved is brought home to us. The Vedantic system of thought recognises six such means, and some of the other systems more and some less. By a little adjustment of definitions however we can reduce all of them to three. These three are Experience, Inference and Authority. At the outset it would seem that the last can never be a method of proof. We shall reserve it for discussion afterwards and now begin with Experience.

2. ELEMENTS OF EXPERIENCE

All thinkers from the confirmed materialist to the profoundest philosopher agree in according to Experience the first place among the methods of proving a thing. But it is only a very few that care to analyse the true nature of Experience. Experience, as we generally understand it, is a mental impression brought about by the contact of our senses with the thing experienced. Experience is not such a simple process as we are apt to assume, but a process which requires a conscious entity, the mind, the senses, the object and also a contact between it and the senses, as well as a contact between the mind and the senses. Let us take an example. Suppose I say "I see this table." What are the necessary elements composing that process of seeing? First of all, I must be here to see it. Even if I were here, I cannot see it unless I withdraw my mind from wandering about and

direct it towards the table. Even if I direct my mind towards it, I cannot see it if I am blind; even if I am not blind, I cannot see it unless I turn my eyes upon it. Last of all there must be a table to be seen. If any of these ingredients, the experiencer, the mind, the eye, the table and their mutual contacts be absent, no experience can arise. If I allow my mind to be thinking of my home, my eyes, even though wide open, cannot convey to me any impression of the table. If in the absence of any of these elements we *do* have experience, those experiences are generally characterised as false and are called delusions. If I see a man standing before me when there is no man, or if I shut my eyes but see a figure threatening me, the ordinary conclusion is that I am the victim of delusions and my seeing cannot be called right experience.

3. Difficulties in Having Experience

Having thus analysed the elements necessary to give rise to an experience, we will easily recognise that the truth or correctness of an experience depends upon the perfection or purity of all and every one of the agencies employed—the mind and the senses—as well as upon the intensity of contact between these *inter se* and between these and the object to be experienced. If the eye is diseased, black may seem blue and yellow white. If the tongue is foul, the most delicious sweets will taste bitter. If the mind is unhinged, a pillar may appear to be a man and the vacant air will be peopled with numberless forms. The slightest aberration from the purity of the mind or the senses will cause a corresponding aberration in the accuracy of the experience. For experience, therefore, to be an infallible guide to us in the proper perception of a thing, the mind and the senses ought to be intensely purified so as to remove the slightest

shadow of doubt about their capacity to receive true impressions. Then again, I may have the best of eyes, but if the object is a dozen miles off how can my eyes see it? Even supposing it is near by, how can I see it if it is jumbled together with other things which also claim my attention? Again, how can I see it aright if somebody is playing close by on some sweet musical instrument thus distracting my mind? The perception therefore can be true and accurate only if the sight pervades the whole of the object seen and if the mind identifies itself with the seeing eye, to the exclusion of every other sense. It is now for us to consider if experience thus analysed is always possible in its perfect sense to us, who presume to rely so much upon it to prove or disprove for us the existence of a particular thing. The body, by its very nature, has inherent in itself the seed of decay and death, and the senses which have to function through that body can never be faultless. The best that we can do is to keep the body clean, free from further contamination in the course of our life and also to eradicate by the use of medicines, fasts and penances, little by little, whatever harmful substances have crept into the composition of the body. We can thus refine it to a very large extent and we will then be able to perceive various things which we were not able to see or to see aright before. So with the purification of the mind. We must first learn to keep it aloof from bad or disquieting thoughts by replacing them with good and elevating ones, and then we can secure for the mind a kind of equilibrium in which it will be able to have conceptions which the impure mind can never hope to. We may also mention, while we are on this topic, that strictly speaking the mind is, in a sense, impure even if it dwells on good conceptions; for, love, affection, pity and so on are as much impurities as hate, cruelty, and others of the sort, in

so far as they both tend to disturb the equilibrium of mind which is essential for correct perception. Such purity of the body and equilibrium of the mind are very difficult to attain. Nevertheless, it must be our earnest and constant endeavour to secure them at any cost. They can be obtained only after a laborious course of training, and it may take years and perhaps lives together to attain them. The whole course of *Acharas* and *Upasanas* ordained and insisted upon in our Sacred Writings is primarily intended to secure this purification of the senses and the mind, though the ultimate object ever remains the realisation of a state of being, transcending the senses and the mind.

4. A Modern Notion Criticised

But, unhappily for the modern age, a popular notion has arisen that the Sastric rules are out of date and arbitrary and require modifications to suit the needs of changing society. The exponents of this novel idea forget, or have yet to know ,that the mind and the senses are inanimate agencies trainable by their employer and subject to definite natural laws. Nobody dares accuse the law of gravitation of being archaic, out of date or arbitrary. Is it not unjust that if by a mere slip of my shoe I lose my footing I should roll down the steps and break my limbs? Ought not the law of gravitation to take into account the fact that I did not intentionally slip? Again, if the machines of an aeroplane get out of order, ought not the same law to recognise that man has conquered gravity and that it has become therefore archaic or obsolete and has no business to precipitate the aeronaut into the sea? If the body, the senses and the mind are objects that can be brought under control and discipline, as every object in the world can be, any law relating to them must, in fact, be eternally true and un-

changeable, as much as the law of gravitation, until they cease to be what they are. The Sastric rules of Achara and Upasana are similarly in the nature of natural laws relating to the purification of the instruments of knowledge. There is no use quarrelling with them. There is no use trying to modify them either. The Sastras never compel any one to do or abstain from doing any particular thing. They give him the full power and freedom to obey their dictates or disregard them; but they warn him beforehand that, as their laws are eternal and for ever true, he will be bringing down on himself the consequences of disobeying them. No kind of law can do anything more. The Penal Code cannot by a summary sweep wipe out the crimes of murder and theft from the face of earth, but can only lay down the consequences of such crimes. If the thieves and the murderers persist in their crimes, they have only to thank themselves that the punishment follows. So with the Sastras. There remains the further question: how do we know that these Sastras *are* eternal laws and immutable like the laws of Nature? This question can be answered only by reference to example and authority which will be considered later on. At this stage it will be sufficient to understand that the main object of our Sastric training is to equip us with the mind and the body in such a refined and faultless condition that we may rely even on them as safe instruments of right perception or experience.

5. Process of Cognition

Before we leave this subject of direct perception, it will be useful to state shortly how our system has analysed the process in which the knowledge of the thing seen arises in the seer. Those acquainted with the modern sciences of optics and the physiology of the sensory system will re-

member that, according to the western system of thought, the object of perception acts upon the sense organ which, on receiving a physical impression — optical, auditory or otherwise, transmits it to the brain through the sensory nerves. They may therefore be a little surprised to learn that in our ancient system the process is explained to be exactly in the reverse order. Whatever be the momentum of the impact of the object on an organ of sense, no perception is, as a matter of fact, caused unless the mind is in tune with that organ. The first condition of a perception is the identification of the mind with the particular organ. As the eye, the ear, the nose etc. convey distinct sensations to the mind, the mind has to be a substance comprehensive enough to identify with those organs. Not only that. Mental faculties require for their substratum a material which can assume at any moment any shape or form, whether it is only in the nature of reproduction, as in recollection, or in that of new combination, as in imagination. The mind is conceived therefore to be, as it were, a fluid substance. The mind flows out through the eye on to the object, envelopes it as seen and is lost in it for the moment and is also for ever impressed with the moulding thus obtained. It is this moulding that makes it possible for the experiencer to record and recollect experiences. As we said in the beginning, the intensity of this moulding is a proof of the extent of the accuracy of the perception. Again, this intensity of moulding has to depend upon the intensity of the impact with the object, otherwise called concentration, as well as upon the fineness or impressionability of the mind substance. The interaction of mind and body upon each other is a fact acknowledged even by modern science, and it will be unscientific and illogical to deny the necessity for regulating our activities, physical and mental, and

individual and social, if we want to have a clear and pure mind. Hate, anger and lust have a tendency to harden the mind against receiving impressions, and they must be sedulously avoided if we want our mind to retain its natural fluidity. Reasoning in the same line, it may be said that, as the impressionability of mind increases with its purity or fineness, the purer the mind the greater is the chance of contamination also; that is why the Sastras prescribe more and more restrictions when we ascend from the lower scales of human beingsto the highest. Further, as in the case of other fluid substances, the mind also has a tendency to flow out at the nearest outlet; and it requires no small amount of strength and perseverance to store it up and let it out in any particular direction chosen by us, to the exclusion of other directions. Concentration therefore is not an easy matter, and right training in concentration is a chief aim of our system of Upasana or one-pointed devotion. To the one who has, by training, developed high impressionability and such a power of concentration and, thus, qualified his mind to receive intense impressions, forgetfulness or lapse of memory cannot but be rare. It would have been seen from the above that direct experience, recognised by all as a sure means of knowledge, is not after all, as already remarked, such a simple matter, and we ought therefore to be especially careful when we seek to direct our impure minds, trained from time immemorial largely in the pursuit of selfish ends, to solve the problems of Life and Existence.

6. Fallibility of Inference

The next subject of our enquiry will be *Inference*. Inference is possible only when we know two facts and the relationship between them. If there is any doubt as to the existence of either of those facts, or as to the persistency

of the relationship between them, there can be no inference. As regards those facts, we have to rely upon direct perception which we have already found to be beset with serious and various difficulties. The persistence of the relationship has to be found out only by a long series of direct perceptions, equally liable to innumerable chances of error. We will explain this with reference to the stock example of the Hindu logician. (1) Wherever there is smoke, there is fire. (2) There is smoke on the mountain. (3) Therefore there is fire on the mountain. The first statement is the general proposition on which the ultimate inference has to rest. It must therefore be beyond doubt. We must first make sure of the correctness of the statement. How did we arrive at such a general proposition? By a series of experiments in direct perceptions. We saw fire in the kitchen, in the burning hayrick and at so many other places. We also saw that smoke was always there. Hence our induction. But this inductive inference that wherever there is smoke there is fire may still be false, for, strictly speaking, we can only say that wherever we have seen smoke there has been fire and not absolutely that wherever there is smoke there must be fire. We have seen some fanciful people who smoke cigar, throw it away and after the lapse of a few minutes slowly emit smoke through their nostrils. It will be certainly incorrect to say that there is fire in their nostrils. Similarly there may be several other instances which take away from the accuracy or universality of this general proposition. Assuming however that it is accurate and universal, we must know for certain that what we see on the mountain is smoke and not mere vapour. We have necessarily to rely upon our senses for this knowledge. We have already pointed out the dangers that are in the way of
3 our accepting this knowledge as accurate. In addition to

all this, we must know what smoke is and what fire is. If we have any faulty conception of either of them, the whole inference is valueless. We thus see that 'inference' has infinitely more chances of error than direct perception. It will therefore be the height of folly to rely merely upon it to arrive at the right knowledge of any truth, much less of any truth transcending the senses and even the mind.

7. Reasoning How Far Helpful

Though reasoning cannot thus by itself be a great help to us, it will be of much use to us in pointing out the various fallacies we are apt to be led into in the course of our attempts to understand the truths taught to us by the Vedas. As De Quincey says, the reason of man is like the two walls of a long narrow corridor in which an elastic ball is thrown slantingly at one end. The object of the ball — here compared to the human mind — is to reach the other end; but being thrown slanting it strikes either of the walls and because of its very striking it takes a forward course, but again slanting till it strikes the opposite wall; once again to be deflected onwards but obliquely and so on repeating the process till it reaches the end of the corridor where you have no more side-walls, no more strikings, in fact no more motion. Reason thus is a limitation upon the free exercise of the thinking faculty of man, but every impact with it will put us on the way towards the right goal but never on the straight path to it. If we want this — the side-walls — to be *always* with us to guide us, it means that we are only making the corridor longer and the goal farther away. When we thus recognise the limited capacity of reason to help us towards the truth, we also see that reason will go a long way towards guiding us on. It is given to only the very exceptional few to divine the truth

intuitively without the aid of reason. To throw a ball right along the centre of a long corridor towards the other end, without once striking the walls, requires a precision, a balance and a steadiness which are very rarely found. The function of our Sastric practical rules of conduct is to develop this precision, balance and steadiness as well as to heighten the elasticity of the mind itself, so that the goal may be reached as early as possible and with as few impacts as possible. It is only those exceptional few that look right through the corridor unimpeded by the side-walls that can have a glimpse of the light even from the very start. The others have before their perspective only the bare walls — obstruction, more obstruction, still more obstruction and so on till by a gradual letting in of the light from the other end they are made to realise that obstruction is not by itself the goal, but the freedom from it and the open light of everlasting life and rest at the end. The side-walls can thus never show us the light, but, provided we are really *inclined* to reach the goal, they can keep us in the path and prevent our going away from it. Such is the legitimate scope of Reasoning or Inference.

CHAPTER III

FAITH

1. 'WORD' AND FAITH

The third of the methods of proof that we mentioned in the last chapter is Authority. It will be more accurate to call it 'Word' as do the Indian philosophers. 'Authority' seems to connote an arbitrary spirit which will not brook any disobedience. It may therefore by its very name engender a prejudice against itself in the minds of the moderns whose motto seems to be what they call 'freedom' and what others call 'licence'. Just as direct experience requires, as a condition precedent to right knowledge, the purity of the perceiving senses and just as inference requires a quick intellect, so does 'Word' require an essential attribute in man before it can profess to prove a thing to him. That attribute is called 'Faith.' This term again is usually relegated to credulous fools and no man with present-day notions will tolerate his being accused of 'Faith'. It therefore seems necessary to examine the full significance of these two terms — Word and Faith.

2. WHAT IS FAITH?

It will be sufficient for our present purpose if it is conceded that every object and the name given to that object are inseperable. The word 'cow' has no independent significance if it does not convey to us the impression of an animal with four legs and so on. The word is thus so connected with the concept it signifies that we cannot dissociate the one from the other. This inseparability of the word and its

significance is the reason why the word when uttered conveys to us at once a true and accurate conception of the object signified. For example, let us take this simple sentence "a cow is grazing." The words "a cow" invariably and unmistakably convey to us the definite impression of an animal. The words "is grazing" likewise convey to us the impression of the action called grazing. If we hear therefore the whole sentence, we get the conception of an animal of a particular species munching grass. We started with saying that the words are always true to their significance. Whenever therefore we hear the sentence "a cow is grazing" we must expect to see a grazing cow, for words never lie nor swerve from their meaning. Suppose however we hear that sentence but find no cow grazing anywhere. We must then try to find out why the sentence has failed to represent the truth. We will usually be able to trace the fault to the speaker. He may not know the language well; he may not have good eyes; he may be a liar. These defects or disqualifications inherent in the speaker contribute to his words losing their true significance. Until we are able to trace these defects and thus explain why the words do not express the truth, we must assume that the words are true and that there *is* a cow grazing somewhere beyond our sight. This statement may seem a little strange to those who have been trained not to believe any statement until its truth is *proved* to them. Our position is just the other way, namely, that everything heard is true until its falsity is proved or is traced to its cause.

A moment's reflection will show that the latter view is the more scientific and practical one. An analysis of our daily doings will be sufficient to prove this. Suppose I go to an unknown part of this town in search of a friend. I am not able to find out his house and have then to ask

the way of some passer-by. He gives me the necessary directions. Suppose now I want him to prove to me the truth of his statement before I consent to take a single step forward; can I ever hope to meet my friend? I *have* to presume the truth of his statement and act accordingly unless, of course, I have reason to think that he is a liar or an ignorant man. On the face of it I can have no suspicion of the veracity of his statement, and his words must be taken to denote what they signify. This passive receptivity of knowledge which enables us to keep before us always the presumption of truth in any statement made to us, until its falsity is apparent or is proved, is called 'Faith'

Let us now take another sentence "The servant is a brute". If we will take the trouble to analyse the quick flashes of thought that run through our minds when we hear this sentence, we will be able to detect these stages: The words will convey to us their true significance that the servant is an animal of the quadruped species. But we will remember at once that the servant is a man and not a quadruped. We will recognise therefore that the words are false to their significance. But here intervenes our firm opinion of the speaker that he is neither a liar nor a man under delusion. This opinion makes us presume that his words must be true in spite of their apparent falsity. We at once go about in search of an interpretation of the words which will preserve the significance of the words, at the same time preserving the integrity of the speaker. We therefore analyse the conception of a brute into its various elements, and in doing so we are able to pitch upon such of the predominant elements as may not be inconsistent with the human personality of the servant. Our regard for the speaker makes us presume that when he mentioned the word 'brute', he did not use the word in its fullest literal

sense but used it only to signify some predominant characteristics which, with other characteristics not here intended to be signified, make up the conception conveyed by the word 'brute.' We conclude that he meant only similarity even though the words on the face of them denote identity between the servant and a brute. We are constrained to place this interpretation upon the sentence, for we are averse to the thought that the words do not represent the truth. This averseness to presume untruth is called 'Faith.' Take again the sentence "Spare the rod and spoil the child." The words, as they stand, convey to us two commands, one to spare the rod and the other to spoil the child. But our commonsense revolts against this interpretation and refuses to accept the two commands as genuine. We are equally averse to the conclusion that the statement was a perverse one, intended to mislead us. We therefore look about for an interpretation which will be true and sensible without violating the significance of the words used. Common sense requires that the sentence should really run "Do not spare the rod and do not spoil the child," but this interpretation will be introducing the exactly opposite proposition to that apparently signified by the original words. To reconcile sense therefore with the actual words used, we arrive at the interpretation "If you spare the rod, you will spoil the child." Why do we thus depart so much from the literal meaning of the words actually used? The only reason that we can give is our unwillingness to ascribe falsehood or meaninglessness to the words used. This unwillingness which persists in us to the extent of saving the truth of the sentence, even by widely departing from a literal interpretation of it, is called 'Faith.'

It will be unnecessary to discuss further instances to show what is the conception designated by the word 'Faith'.

3. Faith in Veda-Sastras

This element of faith is such a necessary condition of human existence that it would be impossible to live without it. This presumption of truth is so universal that the workings of our courts of justice, our governments and all other institutions of human society have their justification only because of it. The Law of Evidence will be meaningless if this presumption did not exist. When a man swears to a particular fact, that fact is proved unless there is any inherent improbability in the statement itself or the speaker is otherwise shown to be unreliable. Our philosophers want us to extend the same presumption to the sacred utterances embodied in our Veda-Sastras. Until this presumption is shaken by some strongly suspicious circumstance, they *do* represent truth. As no human author with known defects claims the authorship of the Vedas, and as the Smritis and other Sastras claim to derive their authority only from the Vedas, the only circumstance that can tend to detract from their value is the existence of any inherent improbability in the statements themselves The function of Mimamsa and allied Sastras is to analyse those statements with a view to search out any such improbability; and the unanimous verdict of these Sastras is that no such improbabilities exist in them, thus demonstrating the eternal truth of those statements. Any person who has even casually glanced through the pages of these Sastras would have realised how critically they have handled the Vedic utterances. The modern characterisation of the Vedas as the

babblings of child-humanity will fade before the more severe strictures of the objector or Purvapakshi. We may make bold to say that our ancients have exhausted all possible methods of attack, and no critic of the present age has been able to urge any fresh point not raised and answered by them. The science of interpretation of the Vedic texts is a highly interesting subject, and it will be a real pleasure to get acquainted with it, even if only to appreciate the acute intelligence and the scientific logic of our great sages. But we leave that subject aside as a consideration of it may not be relevant to our present purpose. Next to the Vedas, the words of our spiritual teachers, Acharyas, command our faith, for here we have the positive advantage of knowing that they have only our welfare at heart and can have no motive to mislead us. Next to them come our parents and all our true well-wishers comprehensively included under the class of 'Aptas'. We need not say that their words are of authority only when they do not run counter to the teachings of the Veda Sastras.

4. Faith and Right Knowledge

In the light of the above observations it will be clear that the 'Word' is a means of bringing home to us 'Faith'. As seeing is but a means for the realisation of the thing seen, as reasoning is but a means for the realisation of the thing inferred, so is the 'Word' but a means for the realisation of the truth conveyed by it. We began by saying that the end of all living beings is to realise in themselves the ideal of absolute existence, knowledge and bliss. We shall now see how far the methods of proof that we have considered till now can help us towards that realisation. The mind and the senses being but finite instruments of knowledge cannot be

expected to convey to us any idea or impression of the Infinite and the Absolute. By inference we can, at the highest, *postulate* the existence of an Infinite and Absolute state of being, but the exact nature of the latter must ever be unknowable. It would seem therefore that only the 'Word' is left to us to really help us towards the goal of life. But the 'Word', as we said before, is only a means and not the end No amount of repeating the sentence "Sugar is sweet" will convey to us the sweetness of sugar. We must try to realise the truth of the statement by taking up a bit of sugar and putting it in our mouths otherwise the sentence is valueless to us. No amount of book reading or repetition of sacred texts therefore can help us towards a realisation of the promised infinite peace and happiness if we do not care to follow the Sastric directions. Nor can any such be of any value to us unless we are in the first place inclined and prepared to receive instruction from the sacred literature. As we have already said, it is this receptivity of knowledge that is called 'Faith'. The greater this receptivity, the more intense will be our earnestness in carrying out the lessons taught to us. The more the earnestness and the perseverance, the nearer will be the goal. The first condition of any progress therefore is faith in the existence and nature of the goal as taught to us and faith in the efficacy of the means prescribed for attaining that goal. As the goal is yet to be reached and the path yet to be trodden, it is foolish and meaningless to ask for the demonstration of the existence of the goal and the efficacy of the path even at the start. It will be as childish as to expect a demonstration of the sweetness of sugar before we consent to put it into our mouth. We must then have 'Faith' in the 'Word' and follow its dictates. There will be time enough to proclaim it false when we follow its dictates and

yet fail to reach the goal. We have been told by some that this is a stale argument, but we may tell them that truth is ever stale, for if it ever assumes the garb of novelty it ceases to be truth. What other way is there of demonstrating the truth or falsity of a statement than following its dictates and thus reaching or failing to reach the promised goal? There is an immense volume of evidence in the shape of the experience of our sages and others who have followed in their footsteps, that they *did* reach the goal having for their guidance the divine words of the Sruti. Why should we disbelieve them? Why should we suspect them of dishonesty and perverseness to the extent of trying to mislead the generations that were to come? There is absolutely nothing to contradict this overwhelming testimony. We have only the mere words of those who have not cared to tread the paths prescribed, and who are therefore utterly incompetent to speak about the efficacy or otherwise of the paths; they can know nothing about them.

5. Faith and Desire

As observed already, 'Faith' is a necessary condition of any progress towards the goal, but it is *only the first step* towards it, and we have many more stages to pass through before we can hope to reach the goal. An analysis of every conscious activity will disclose to us three stages:— (1) Knowledge of the object to be attained and of the means of attaining it, (2) Desire for the object and (3) Activity in pursuance of that desire. Unless these three elements are present there can be no responsible action. I may look into a railway guide and learn the route to Banaras. But knowledge of the route cannot take me to Banaras unless I desire to go there. Again, I may know the route to Banaras, and I

may very much desire to go there, but I cannot actually reach Banaras if I do not move my limbs. The function of faith is only that of the railway guide. By the strength of that faith we will be put in possession of knowledge of many things which we cannot learn for ourselves. The greater our faith in the truth of the statements describing to us these things, the greater will be our desire to attain them if they are good, or to avoid them if they are bad. Knowledge therefore will lead us on to the second stage of desire. Desire getting stronger and stronger will compel us to act, so that we satisfy that desire. Each previous step therefore will naturally lead us on to the next, if we are firm in that step. If our knowledge is hazy, there will arise no desire; and if our desire is indifferent there will follow no action.

As may be expected, faith that was intrumental in securing for us the knowledge of the far off object and the means to attain it, must persist also in the latter two stages. Faith in the stage of desire will teach us what is desirable and what is not — not in the sense that we are forbidden to desire any particular thing, for desire cannot be forbidden, but that we will be taught which desires of ours are practically attainable with our present means and in our present environments. If this faith is wanting, we will be letting loose all our desires, and as desires have a habit of insisting upon their satisfaction we will find ourselves engaged in all sorts of activities towards the fulfilment of those desires. But, as God has, fortunately or unfortunately for us, limited our capacities, we will find the means at our command insufficient to help us in those activities or we may find the environments hostile to our unlimited scope for action— with the result that all sorts of passion like anger, hatred, jealousy and the

rest of them will arise in us on account of the non-fulfilment of our desires. When these evil passions once arise, it will be very difficult to get rid of them. When once a labourer in the field begins to envy the rich man riding by in a motor car, he must then and for ever afterwards bid farewell to peace of mind; he will gradually learn to hate the rich man, then try to do away with the class of the rich, and indulge in all sorts of activities for pulling down the rich to the level of the poor, finding in the end however to his eternal disappointment that the poor man clothed in new-earned powers is in no way better than the hated rich. Current of events in the modern world is a sufficient proof of the danger of unbridled desires.

A man under the influence of a particular desire cannot judge for himself whether that desire is legitimate or practically attainable, for he is biassed in its favour. He therefore needs to be taught the nature and extent of the desires that he can legitimately foster as well as of the desires that he must learn to put down in his own interest. To determine this, we have again to resort to faith. If a man is thirsty when laid up with fever, he will be only harming himself if he insists upon drinking cold water in disobedience to the physician's directions. He must have faith in his physician's word and put down the desire for cold water. There is no use saying — "Why should I not drink it while so many others are drinking?" For, the law of medicine is inexorable in that it prohibits the drinking of cold water by the fevered patient. So with desires for all objects, temporal or spiritual. One function of our Sastras is to define for each man his legitimate desires in the circumstances and environments in which he is placed. We must have faith in the value of such defi-

nitive provision. If we have no such faith, but persist in giving unbridled scope to our desires, we are sure to come to grief. We may desire to attain Moksha before tomorrow, but the Sastra steps in and says — "No, Sir, it is not such an easy matter. You are yet far away from the path to it. You may have it in view as the last goal, but your immediate desire must be proportionate to your present capacity." In short, the Sastras, by a proper regulation of the immediately attainable ends at the several intermediate stages of progress, furnish us with a perfect and well-graded training ground suited to each one's capacity for the attaining of the same goal of absolute bliss at the end.

6. Faith and Action

If faith is thus necessary even for regulating our desires, it needs no saying that faith should persist also in the third stage of activity. But unfortunately for modern India, though we have faith in the teachings of the Vedanta, we have faith in the legitimacy of the desire for happiness, limited or absolute, we have absolutely no faith in the actions prescribed as necessary for the attainment of that desire. All of us desire to be healthy but are averse to following the laws of health. All of us desire strength but refuse to take exercise. All of us are desirous of wealth but are unwilling to work for it. Why is it so? We have not the necessary faith in the capacity of the laws of health to keep us free of ailments, of exercise to strengthen our muscles, and of work to bring us wealth. When we begin to doubt the efficacy of the means, when we begin to doubt the certainty of reaching our goal, we fall away from action. For any action therefore to be fruitful, we must imbue it with faith in the certainty of its taking us to the goal.

7. Faith Indispensable

Faith, being thus an essential condition of right knowledge, legitimate desire and fruitful action, is indispensable for the attainment of any goal. It is infinitely more so in the search after the Ultimate Truth. It should therefore be the earnest prayer of us all, who claim and hope to realise the perfect and unlimited state of existence, knowledge and bliss sooner or later, that God should in His infinite mercy and love grant us the faith to believe in His teachings and the courage and perseverance to follow the Sastric directions.

CHAPTER IV

GOD AND THE UNIVERSE

1. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Philosophers from time immemorial, from the beginning of creation if there was one, have sought to define God but all unsuccessfully. Equally unsuccessful have been their attempts to understand the universe and it will be very difficult therefore to find any satisfactory definition of these two conceptions. To define a thing properly we must first know it completely. If any person should attempt to give a definition without such a complete knowledge, he can mention therein only a few characteristics which *he* understands to be the essentials of the thing sought to be defined. Another may consider other characteristics more essential and embody them in *his* definition. Both of them may be equally true, but neither of them can be completely true. To a true Bhakta, or devotee, God may seem to be Mercy and Love, to a sinner the Avenger and the Just, to the virtuous the Good and the Giver. All these may be true, but none of the qualities indicated can express or define God in His true essence and fulness. Similar is the case with the universe. To the pessimist it is all misery, to the light-hearted all pleasure, to the fatalist all doom, to the sceptic all chance. None of these is a definition of the universe, but is a definition only of the standpoint of the definer. To rise above all standpoints is not possible for the limited intellect of man, and it is therefore impossible for us to define exactly what is God and what is the universe. It is sufficient for our present purpose that we

have *some* conception of God even though vague and indefinite, and an equally vague and indefinite conception of the universe. The primary object of this chapter is to place before the ordinary reader an idea of the relationship between God and the universe, and in the course of doing so we may also convey to him some impression of the way in which the ancient system of Vedic philosophy has defined them.

2. Our Problems

Existence, as we know it, can be comprehensively and completely divided, as we have already stated, under two heads—the *person* and the *thing;* in other words the *perceiver* and the *perceived*. That the perceiver and the perceived are distinct from one another, is shown by the very necessity of the process of perception. But this same act of perception shows us that the two *are not* absolutely distinct but are inter-related to each other. The unravelling of the mystery of this relationship between these two is in truth the goal of all philosophies. What is the universe that we see around us? Who are we that are seeing it? And why do we see it? If these problems are solved, the relationship between God and the universe will become clear.

3. Incompetence of Reason

Each system of philosophy has tried to solve these problems in its own way; but the fact that there *are* various such systems is itself proof that none of them is completely satisfactory. There is evidently some inherent defect in all systems of thought that defies full illumination and makes the final solution ever elude our grasp. When we profess to determine the relationship between the perceiver and the per-

ceived, we must cease to belong to the categories of the perceiver and of the perceived, if we want our solution to be correct. If we want to impartially judge a case, we must be neither the plaintiff nor the defendant. According to our Sastras therefore, the only standpoint from which we can really solve and realise the relationship between the subject or perceiver and the object or perceived is when we transcend both. No amount of reasoning can enable us to arrive at such a stage, for all reasoning assumes more or less the stable existence of the reasoning perceiver and in a way the stable existence of the perceived as well. On the other hand, reasoning by its very nature will be a hindrance to us. If reason then, the supreme and invaluable gift said to be vouchsafed by God to man, is to be of no help to us, it would seem we have really no guide at all. Happily for us Hindus, the Divine Words of the Sruti, the Revealed Veda, come to our rescue and solve our problems for us. In fact, such Revealed Words alone in the world can rightly solve them. For those who have no faith in such Words, but persist in trying to arrive at an independant solution of the problems, they will for ever remain insoluble, and the highest truth must ever remain for them the Unknown and the Unknowable.

4. IDEALISM

Before we consider the solution given to us by the Sruti, it will be useful to understand how the man-made systems of thought seek to solve the relationship between the perceiver and the perceived. There are some systems which assume the permanency of the perceiver and seek to analyse the perceived. To them the perceiver is a constant persistent individuality and the universe is an everchanging restless mass of

phenomena cognised by the former as the objects of his perception. The universe is, according to them, made up only of the successive sense impressions formed on the retina of individual consciousness. In short, the universe is a "bundle of sensations". It has therefore no independent existence without the perceiver. What we call the universe is only a void, but peopled with the creations of our own conscious self. These idealistic philosophers are called *Jagatsoonyavadis.*

5. Materialism

Another set of philosophers assume the permanent existence of the perceived universe and seek to analyse the perceiver. To them an analysis of what we call the soul shows that it is nothing but a sum total of successive sense perceptions created by the objects perceived. The perceiver has no independent existence without the perceived. The soul is really a void in its essence, but seems to us to be a positive entity because of the uninterrupted flow of successive perceptions of phenomena. Though the water in the river is always flowing and is therefore impermanent and ever-changing, do we not give the flowing water the positive name of 'river' simply because this regular incessant succession of water is sufficient to form the basis in our mind of a concrete conception? The river is really a notional entity —not a thing by itself — but becoming the object of a conception because of the ceaseless flow of water. The soul is similarly only a notional entity — a mere void — but becoming the object of a conception simply because of the ceaseless though ever-changing succession of perceptions of phenomena. These materialistic philosophers are called *Atmasoonyavadis.*

6. The Above Systems Examined

These two sets of philosophers — the Jagatsoonyavâdis and the Atmasoonyavâdis — thus try to solve the relationship between the perceiver and the perceived by denying the existence of the one or the other. The fallacies in their respective reasonings are not difficult to find out. If the universe has no independent existence other than that of the perceiver, then it must be a bundle of sensations of the perceiver's own making. The existence of pain, sorrow and misery in the world is incompatible with the creative power thus postulated of the soul, for the soul would never care to create any sensation harmful or distasteful to itself. Again, the rise of similar perceptions in all of us when we see for example a chair — if it is a chair to me, it is a chair to you — shows that the perceptions take their origin as much from the perceived as from the perceiver. This characteristic persistence in each object of perception, which keeps it distinct from and unconfused with every other object, cannot by any trick of reasoning be made to disappear from the world. Turning to the other set of philosophers, the materialists, we see that the faculty of recollection which connects the past experiences and the present is impossible of reconciliation with the theory of an ever-changing perceiver. A substantial stratum of consciousness, over which the successive varying perceptions of phenomena may flow on continuously, leaving the stratum unmodified and unaffected, is an absolute necessity for the existence of the varying perceptions themselves. All flowing water is not a river except when it flows in a defined course over a permanent *non-flowing* bed. These enquiries lead us to two conclusions: *firstly*, that the perceived universe has, though subject to change, an insistent dura-

bility of its own, independent of the perceiver; *secondly*, that the perceiver has an insistent personality of his own, independent of the object perceived. We come again therefore only to the point from which we started.

7. SANKHYAS

We will now take up a third set of philosophers. They realise this essential difference and incompatibility of the perceiver and the perceived *inter se*. The perceiver is conscious, unchanging and unchangeable in essence. The perceived is unconscious and ever-changing. All sensation is the result of contact between these two. All pain and misery is the result of this contact whether it follows immediately or after a short-lived appearance of pleasure. To eliminate pain and misery therefore from our experience, we must for ever remain solely conscious and unchanging, that is, have no sort of relationship with the perceived. We must alienate ourselves completely from the perceived and be simply ourselves. The absence of realisation of this distinction is the cause of pain. Once we realise that the perceiver is not and cannot be in any way *related* to the perceived, we are free from pain and to that end must all activities be directed. This denial of relationship between the perceiver and the perceived, this insistence on their absolute distinctness, is the basis of the Sankhya school of philosophy. But, if we analyse this view, we will find that our problems are as unsolved as ever. We realise in every day experience that the perceiver and the perceived *are* inter-related, and to say that from the incompatibility of their natures they *cannot* be interrelated is only a negation of fact, and no solution. This system may be helpful as suggesting a course of training to free ourselves to a great

extent from the trammels of the world, but it cannot be sufficient to solve our philosophic doubts or to lead us on to the realisation of the ultimate truth.

8. True Philosophy

All the above three systems are only partially true and therefore also partially wrong. A study of them and of the objections to them will prove to us that there is an aspect of the perceiver which does not depend for its existence on the perceived, and that there is an aspect of the perceived which apparently does not depend for its existence on the perceiver. It is these aspects that are the opposites of each other and therefore incompatible with each other according to the Sankhyas. There is however another aspect of the perceiver and another aspect of the perceived which are dependent on each other, so much so that we are enabled to deny the existence of the one or the other. A system of philosophy to perfectly satisfy us must take into account these two aspects of the perceiver, one of which cannot co-exist with the perceived and the other cannot exist without the perceived, and similarly also the two aspects of the perceived, one of which cannot co-exist with the perceiver and the other cannot exist without the perceiver. The Vedanta furnishes such an ideal system of philosophy and falsifies the claims of the other systems to solve our problems, and we shall directly proceed to explain it.

9. Activity

I am now speaking. What does it mean? I am now relating myself to a particular kind of activity called 'speech'. My speech cannot arise without me. I the speaker *as such* can have no existence without my speech. But all of you

will agree with me that when you grasp my speech you do not grasp me, and when you see me you cannot see my speech. That is, my speech and myself have distinct individualities but interrelated to each other. I can exist without my speech. My speech can live long after I, the speaker, am gone. The connecting link therefore between me and my speech is the act of speaking. What then is this act of speaking? Before I open my mouth my speech is already with me but merged in my capacity to speak. This potentiality of speech that inheres in me is infinite and indefinite. I have the capacity to speak in any language I like and in any pitch that I like. But this infinite and undefined capacity translating itself into kinetic action must be confined to a particular language and a particular pitch. In other words, the act of speaking is a limitation upon my infinite capacity to speak. The act of speaking is also only a manifestation in concrete of the capacity to speak. The capacity to speak cannot exist independently of me. My speech can never come into existence but for my capacity to speak. But I can exist without my speech. Such is the relation between the perceiver and the perceived. We shall give a few more examples to make our meaning clearer.

10. Quality

We all have some conception of electricity. What it is no scientist has been able to define, but all are agreed that it saturates the whole atmosphere and, for aught we know, it pervades the whole universe. It is ominpresent, invisible, intangible. How then do we know that it exists? Because we see its activities, as motive power, heat, light etc. We will take one of such activities and analyse it. We have seen

an electric spark. The electric spark is not different from electricity, but it is neither omnipresent nor invisible nor intangible. Wherefrom did it acquire its qualities which seem to be the direct opposites of those of the basic electricity? If these qualities did not exist in some form in the latter, how can they be found in its manifestation? If they did exist there, how could they co-exist with the other qualities? Here again the explanation is similar to that in our last illustration. Electricity, the omnipresent, has inherent in itself the capacity to manifest itself in an unlimited and infinite variety of activities. This capacity is not inconsistent with the taking up of a particular form of activity. While it is electricity pure and simple, you can call it neither heat nor light nor motive power; and in a sense you may also call it all these. This infinite capacity, when it ceases to be potential and assumes a kinetc form, is said to manifest itself in action and in this manifestation, which is really a limitation upon its infinite scope, the same electricity has had to be endowed with two attributes—a *quality* which gives it the name of electric light and a *form* which makes it appear, say, circular. This name and this form exist only in the manifestation, but the capacity to take them is basic in the electricity itself. We therefore see that the electric spark is but a limitation of the capacity of electricity, and this capacity is not different from electricity itself, but that electricity can exist without exercising the capacity.

11. Form

Let us then take the ordinary illustration of a lump of clay. While it is only a lump of clay there inheres in it a capacity to take any form and any name. It may be flattened out and be called a plate. It may be rounded and

be called a ball. It may be given a hollow belly and be called a pot. All these names and forms exist potentially in the lump of clay but none of these names and forms is essential for the existence of the lump of clay. These manifestations are not altogether different from the lump of clay and cannot exist without it.

12. Appearance

Take again the stock example of the Hindu philosopher, the piece of rope lying across the path in semi-darkness. Four persons happen to see it. To one it appears as a stick, to another as a hollow groove in the ground, to the third as a snake. Each appearance produces the necessary and appropriate modification in the mind of the person seeing it. But to the fourth man who sees the reality all these appearances exist not, and all those modifications are not for him. This appearance of the many out of the one existing reality is possible only if we assume that the capacity to appear as the many, *for whatever reason,* is in a way inherent in the reality itself. We also realise that none of these forms is the reality or its essence.

13. Effect is Only Cause Under Limitation

From a careful consideration of the above and similar illustrations we will see that every cause has inherent in it a capacity to take effect, that this capacity is infinite and unlimited and therefore includes the capacity to bring about a particular effect, that a particular effect is but a limitation of this infinite and undefined capacity and that this limitation always assumes a name and a form which are not of the cause. We therefore also see that the cause never dies

but always subsists in the effect but with the limitation of a name and a form which were already in itself potentially in its capacity to take any name and any form. It naturally follows that, whenever we want to ascertain the cause of a particular thing, we must eliminate the two characteristics of the name and the form so that we may get at the real thing which has assumed this name and this form in order to transmute itself into the effect.

14. The Principle Applied to the Universe

Modern scientists are beginning to realise that the whole universe can be traced to have for its basic substratum a single cause, in spite of all the differentiations that we see around us. The ancient Hindu system of philosophy long ago found out this truth and far more from the Vedic revelation. It has been definitely declared that names and forms are the characteristics of an effect. If, as we said, we want to arrive at the true nature of a cause, we must learn to eliminate these characteristics. All things in the universe have names and forms. They are therefore all effects. All individual beings in the universe have names and forms. They are therefore all effects. Some people here suggest that all unconscious things may be traced to a primary unconscious cause, and that all conscious entities may be traced to an equally primary conscious cause. But Sri Sankaracharya says: If two things co-exist they must be distinct from each other, that is to say, each has a distinguishing characteristic which is not the other's. Each therefore has a name which is not the other's. Each is also limited in its existence by the other. Each has therefore a limitation—a form—which is not the other's. Each therefore having a name and a form

must necessarily be an effect and can never be a cause. The great Acharya traces therefore the ultimate cause, the ever-subsisting reality, to only one, the Ever Pure, Nameless and Formless.

15. Relation of the Universe to God

That Absolute One has inherent in itself the infinite capacity to manifest itself. This potential capacity is called its Sakti. When this Sakti tends towards manifestation, it ceases to be potential and endows the Absolute One with a name and a form. The Absolute One at this stage is called Isvara, the Creator, the Sustainer, the Lord, the Life of the universe. The whole universe is the manifestation of His Sakti. The universe is not therefore different from the Absolute, Nameless, Formless One; it is the same but under limitations of name and form. If we eliminate these limiting attributes, the universe will be seen to have no independent existence of its own. It is in this sense that the world is a myth, is non-existent. Such is the relation between the Universal Intelligence and the differentiated universe, *the relation of oneness*, if relation it can be called. Such is the relation between the perceiver and the perceived. The perceiver, before he begins to perceive and when his capacity for perception is only potential and therefore all-embracing, is one, the ever-pure, the ever-happy; when this capacity becomes kinetic, the limitations of name and form appear. And, because of the limitations, appear also activities of various sorts, and pain and pleasure follow. To sum up, the perceived is the manifestation in limitation of the perceiver's infinite capacity. The perceived has no existence independent of this capacity, but it is neither this capacity

pure and simple. It has had super-added to it the two limitations of name and form. When the perceiver shakes off his acts of perception and the perceived is deprived of its name and form, both of them merge into the Absolute One, that is neither the Subject nor the Object of perception. That is the Supreme and Only Reality, and that is the God of the Upanishads.

CHAPTER V

SOME EPITHETS OF GOD

1. THREE EPITHETS

All religions in the world, from the most primitive to the most highly cultured, are one in attributing to God the three qualities of omnipresence, omniscience and omnipotence. But a little thinking will make it clear that these three qualities can be actually and in their fullest sense ascribed to God, only if we accept the explanation, given in the previous chapter, of the relationship of oneness between 'God' the Universal Cause and His manifestation in limitation called the 'Universe'.

2. OMNIPRESENCE DEFINED

So long as we assume the existence of anything simultaneously with God, we are limiting the existence of God to everything but that particular thing. To attribute to a particular thing a presence at a particular place is tantamount to denying the existence of every other thing at that place. It is the essence of distinct things that they mutually exclude each other at the same place. If two things therefore are to be assumed as co-existing in the same place, it must be that either of them is unreal. A son is an entity distinct from a father. A son and a father being two separate individuals cannot both of them sit in the same chair. Even if they manage to squeeze themselves into it, the space occupied by the one is not the space occupied by the other. It cannot therefore be said that the son is sitting in the

same place as the father. Suppose however we *do* want to witness such a phenomenon, how can we possibly arrange it? There is only one contingency in which such a phenomenon is possible. Either or both of them must cease to be distinct individualities. Though son and father are two distinct conceptions mutually exclusive, they can be related to a common entity who is neither the son nor the father in his essence, but who can be the basis whereon these two conceptions can be engrafted. I am a son, I am a father. If I occupy a chair, there will be nothing illogical in saying that a son and father is occupying the chair. Here the I that is occupying the chair is neither the son nor the father in essence, but the sonship and the fatherhood are different aspects or attributes of him. If however anyone insists on looking upon me as a son, he cannot at the same moment look upon me as a father for, as we observed, the two conceptions are mutually exclusive. Again, a lump of cotton is a conception distinct from a cloth. The cotton will occupy space, as will a cloth. If the cotton and the cloth should co-exist, they will be occupying distinct spaces, so that the cotton cannot exist where the cloth is and the cloth cannot exist where the cotton is. Suppose however we want to conceive of them as occupying the same space. The only cirumstance in which they can do so is when the cotton and the cloth cease to be separate entities, that is, when the cotton is not different from the cloth and when the cotton and the cloth are related to each other as cause and effect. A lump of cotton which has not caused the existence of a particular cloth can never be made to occupy the same place with that cloth. Thus, the co-existence of the cotton and the cloth in the same space is possible only if there is identity

between them in essence but their separate appearances are related to each other as cause and effect. Even here, if you look upon the object before you as a lump of cotton, the conception that it is a cloth will disappear at the moment, for those two conceptions, to repeat again, are distinct and mutually exclusive.

3. Omnipresence of God

From the above illustrations it will be clear that if the universe is a *distinct* thing co-existent with God, God cannot occupy the space occupied by the universe. He cannot therefore be omnipresent. If however the universe is an attribute, a manifestation, an effect of God, depending for its existence solely on the existence of God, both of them, not being distinct entities but the identical thing under different aspects, may be said to co-exist with each other, and God will be really omnipresent. But, as we said while dealing with the illustrations, if we realise in direct experience the immanence of God before us, the universe *as such* will cease to appear; and if we look upon the universe as existing before us *as such*, God will refuse to show Himself to us; for, the two, being distinct, cannot co-exist.

4. Omniscience of God

Let us now consider the other characteristic of omniscience ascribed to God. We have first to define the exact nature of knowledge. It is one of the most elusive of conceptions. We shall not launch on any disquisition into the metaphysics of knowledge. It is the well-thought-out conclusion in our philosophical system that, in all cases of knowledge or perception, an identification of the knower and of the object known is secured at the instant of knowledge.

At the moment when I see a particular thing. I forget that I am so and so, I forget that the thing before me is a thing distinct from me, I forget that a process of seeing is necessary to see that thing. At the next moment however the consciousness that I am so and so, that the thing before me is distinct from me and that I saw it, asserts itself. The mind, as pointed out before, flows out, as it were, permeates the object perceived and becomes one with it; that is how, even when the object is taken away, the mind which grasped it is able to retain, as if it were a wax mould, the impression that it received. Though such is the exact explanation of the phenomenon of knowledge, accustomed as we are to differentiation, we will feel outraged to be seriously told that when we see a chair, we *are* a chair even for an instant, for we have learned to associate the chair with attributes that, we think, are not with us. That the above explanation is the correct one can however be clearly seen if we take as an example a thing whose attributes we can think of as pertaining to ourselves without any derogation to our high conception of our worth. Suppose we attend a theatre and witness a very realistic enacting of a pathetic scene. When we are witnessing it, we are sure to forget our own individuality as well as the individuality of the actor; we are sure also to identify ourselves with the character personified. That this identification is complete is shown by our shedding tears when personally we have no cause for sorrow. There may be some indifferent theatre-goers who do not thus identify themselves with the characters depicted on the stage; but it cannot be said of them that they fully knew or enjoyed the characters. The greater therefore the identification between the knower and the known, the more complete and perfect

is his knowledge. To be able therefore to say of God that He is omniscient, that His knowledge is complete, perfect and eternal, we cannot proceed on any other hypothesis than that He is eternally, completely and perfectly one with the known, the universe and everything in it. If this identity is not complete in any particular, His omniscience is the less in that particular.

5. Omnipotence Defined

Then again, what is omnipotence? First of all, let us see what 'power' is and how it is exercised. I have the power to walk. What does it mean? I have the control over the limbs that are the instruments of walking. It will not do to merely say that I have legs, for I may lose control over them sometimes. When I am asleep or my leg is affected by paralysis, I cannot be said to have the power to walk. How do I exercise that control when I have it? As long as I feel that my leg is a material mass of flesh and bone, it will be inert and cannot be moved except with the help of some other agency. But the moment I feel that it is a part of myself and that its existence is only for and because of me, no further effort is necessary to make it active but my will. Only the feeling of identity between the wielder and the object of power is necessary. A pen is an inert material object which cannot help itself or others. Suppose I want to make it the object of my power, that is, to excercise control over it. My first step should be to take it up in my hand and thus give it a status as a virtual part of my body itself. I can now write with it or break it or do anything else with it. Suppose however, instead of my wanting to use it as an object of my physical power, I want it to write down my thoughts, that is, I want it to come under the immediate

control of my mind. For that also I must in a way identify it with my mind. That this identification does really take place is shown by my saying that I write when really it is the pen that writes. The moment however this control is loosened or the pen begins to assert its distinct individuality by, say, getting its nib spoiled and refusing to obey my will, this identity is destroyed, for we see that, when the pen with the bad nib does not write, we donot say "*I* do not write", but that the *pen* does not write. Suppose again I see a man going along the street. He is a distinct individual unrelated to me. Suppose I want to bring him under my control. I can do so either by buying his services or inducing in him a feeling of love or fear. He is thereby made to lose his individuality. My interests become his. All his activities are only for my benefit and the result of my will. He comes under my power only so far and so long as I identify him with myself, so as to take upon myself the credit or the responsibility for his actions, as if I did them myself and only so far and so long as he identifies himself and his interests with me and my interests. The moment he feels or I feel that we are distinct persons with distinct interests, my power over him vanishes. If he begins to feel that he has other interests to serve than mine, he will cease to be a faithful friend or obedient servant. We mention these illustrations only to show that the intensity of power possessed by a person over another person or object is proportionate to the intensity of identification secured between them.

6. How is God Omnipotent?

Similarly with the universe. If the universe were a distinct entity with existence, purpose and interests of its own, independent of God, God could have no power over

it. Therefore to be all-powerful over it, without any sort of limitation, the identification between God and the universe must be complete. Again, a master who is always directing the activities of his servants by personally giving them directions and compelling their obedience may be called powerful. But his power is certainly far inferior to the power of that master whose servants carry out his intentions without awaiting his instructions or commands and even before he expresses in words his intentions. The mere presence alone of the master is wanted in the latter case to set all the servants working. Such is the function of God in the universe. *He is* and the universe. is active because of Him. Such a master of the universe is certainly all-powerful, omnipotent.

7. The epithets Significant Only in Vedanta

We thus see that, though the other religions in the world use the epithets 'omnipresent', 'omniscient' and 'omnipotent' to describe God, as our religion also does, they become appropriate and possible epithets only if we assume the absolute identity of God and the universe as explained above. The epithets cannot have their fullest significance in any other explanation.

CHAPTER VI

THE MEANS OF REALISATION

1. 'SAT' OR ESSENCE OF THE UNIVERSE

How to realise the absolute identity of God and the universe was briefly discussed in chapter iv. We said there that we must rise above the conceptions of the perceiver and the perceived by merging these two in the one conception of the Absolute Reality. Before undertaking a detailed consideration of the means prescribed to attain that stage, a general review of them in the light of our explanation of the relationship between the perceiver and the perceived may be found useful. For us who are immersed in differentiation, it will be impossible to grasp the true nature of that stage or to attain it. We shall have to begin by a merging of the perceived. By merging we mean securing the gradual disappearance of its distinct individuality.

This losing of individuality may be secured in either of two ways. Suppose I have a book in my hand. It contains, say, 300 pages, Demy Octavo size, on featherweight paper. It is bound in blue calico, and the name of the book is printed in bold gilt letters. All these specifications constitute what we call the book. Without these or similar attributes we cannot call it a book. Suppose the contents are Bhagavadgeeta with Bhashya and I dive into these. If any one then asks me what it is that I am holding in my hand, I will answer at once and without hesitation — "Bhagavadgeeta"; I will forget the 300 pages and the blue calico and the gilt letters, for I know that these do not form the

essence of the book but are only its unessential appendages. The form, the size and the get-up become immaterial to me so long as I grasp the essence. If however I had no knowledge of the contents, the book would remain for me the 300 pages of paper, bound in calico. To eliminate therefore the form and the appendages of a particular thing and thus get at its essence is a sure way of annihilating its individuality. So with the perceived universe, which we must analyse. The universe is always changing. A bangle of gold may become a necklace tomorrow and a chain the day after. The mere form of a bangle or a necklace or a chain is not its essence. Its essence is gold. We must go on analysing until we are satisfied that we cannot further trace the essence inherent in the object perceived. We will find in the end that that essence is a thing of which we can postulate only that it exists. Every object in the universe subjected to such a severe analysis will be found to have as its essence that same thing. This method of investigation will ultimately take us to a stage when the perceiver, the analyser, is existing as an insistent personality but all the perceived merge into One—the Prime Cause of the universe —the *Sat* of the Upanishads.

2. Enlarge your Conception

The other method by which the perceived can be made to lose its individuality is as follows. A book is a distinct object of our perception. Place it in a library. It will be comprehended then in the idea of a library and thereby will lose its separate significance. Similarly relate any object before you to a more comprehensive and higher conception, and then it will lose its individuality. If you see your

wife, learn to look upon her as mere woman, and you will begin to forget that she is the wife. This is what Ramakrishna Paramhamsa is said to have done. Then learn to look upon her as only human being, you will forget she is a woman. This is what Sri Risyasringa did. Learn to look upon her as an animal and you will forget she is human. And so on, enlarge and widen the conception of which you make her a part. If you see an object of pleasure before you, realise how insignificant it is when compared with a higher object of pleasure. Realise that all our earthly pleasures are as nothing to the happiness that can be had in Svarga. If you fix therefore your attention on the latter, the former will cease to affect you. If your ambition is the happiness of Satyaloka, the pleasures of Svarga will cease to have any significance for you. Enlarge therefore your conception till you cannot enlarge it further. You will ultimately learn to look upon the universe as *one* entity comprehending and rising above all the differentiations that are seen there. Here again the perceiver will subsist as an independent entity.

3. Love and Service

As with the perceived, so with the perceiver. I may lose my individuality by throwing off my characteristics and going to sleep or by losing myself in a crowd. We shall consider the latter alternative first. I have passions of my own and activities of my own. Suppose I enter a crowd of excited people. Gradually I will be losing my individual passions and will adopt as my own the sentiments and passions of the crowd. I will be swayed to and fro just as it suits the purpose or the whim of the crowd. Similarly, a man will lose the intensity of his individuality a little if he realises that he is only a member of a larger body, say, a family, with which

he identifies himself. His inclinations and actions will gradually adapt themselves to the requirements of the family even at the cost of his own personal requirements. This is a first step towards the widening of his personality. If he learns to realise that his family is but a fractional part of a village, his family's inclinations and requirements and his own will gradually merge in, and adapt themselves to the interests of the village as a whole. If he enlarges his personality still further and realises that he belongs to a particular class a particular nation, a particular country, he will be gradually losing his narrow individuality as his interests will have been subordinated to, and become one with the interests of his class, his nation, his country, and he will not care for his personal interests. If he advances along this path of widening his personality, he will begin to realise the interests of all beings in the universe as his own and learn to forget that he can have any separate interests of his own. He will personally cease to have any cause for pain or pleasure. This is the path of Love and Service. But the losing of individuality can never be complete here, for, though the perceiver's personal interests may vanish, he will still be conscious that he is a perceiver, an actor for the good of all.

4. Analyse the Perceiver

We will now take up the other method that we mentioned as capable of producing an annihilation of the perceiver as such. Analyse the perceiver and find out his essense. I am a son in relation to my father, father with reference to my child, a husband in the view of my wife, a brother for my brother, lawyer to my clients, and so on. Except when I am considered as related to these persons external to myself,

I am neither a son nor a father nor any of the others. But what is the common element in me which makes it possible for all these mutually exclusive and inconsistent conceptions of relationship to be engrafted on me? That common element which persists through all these aspects must be my essence. I need not say that common element is embodied in the two words "I am". Whether I am viewed as a son or as a husband and so forth, the essence and unchanging characteristic of me is my existence. We have now reduced the essence of the perceiver to an entity unrelated to the objects around him. But a further enquiry regarding his own nature is necessary, for we do not know yet what he is. He sees when he is related to the eye, he hears when he becomes related to the ear and so on. We will recognise therefore that his being a seer or a hearer, as much as his being a son or a husband, is not his essence but a characteristic attributed to him because of his relation to the senses. The common element in all these sensations is that he cognises impressions. Does he then always do that? He does not, for in his dreams and in his deep sleep the external physical objects which give rise to sensations cease to exist for him, but *he* exists for we know that *he* dreams, *he* sleeps. We thus see that to be awake and be receiving sense impressions is not an essential characteristic of the perceiver. We will have to find out a common element which subsists throughout all these states of waking, dream and sleep. If we analyse these states, we can say of the perceiver that he cognises sense impressions while waking, cognises mental images while dreaming and cognises dull happiness during sleep. His essence which must subsist in all these states is thus found to be only cognition. We cannot accurately describe him therefore by any other word than *chit*. Once we come to realise that he is *chit*, we

will have learned to forget the body, the senses and the mind as essential ingredients of him. Thus, all the unessentials which endowed him with an individuality will disappear and he will remain the infinite, the free, the ever-conscious.

5. Method Examined

We have thus attempted to give you an outline of four methods of investigations. We have, for purposes of clarity of expression and understanding, described them as different methods: but a little consideration will show that each method depends in a way upon the others also. For example, when I am reading a book I am conscious only of the book. The universe other than that book then ceases to exist for me. I am at the same time transmuting myself into the 'reader'. My sonship, my brotherhood and all the many different relationships will also then vanish from me. Anybody who adopts any of the methods mentioned above will be unconsciously following the others also. But, the merging of the perceiver and the perceived will not be complete in the first three methods. *In the first,* wherein we analyse the objects of perception and arrive at their essence (*sat*), we start from an assumption of the permanence of the perceiver or analyser, and the same assumption continues to the last, so that even when we are able to get at the Primal Cause of the universe, that Primal Cause and its perceiver will subsist as independent entities. *In the second method,* we relate the object perceived to a higher conception. Here again, even if we arrive at the highest conception, the All-pervading Being, the consciousness that we are the perceiver and that that Being is different from and cognised by us will always subsist. Further again in this method, even if we realise that

the object before us is only an insignificant part of a whole, we will still be conscious that it is only a part and not the whole, that is, the realisation of the identity of the object before you with the Universal Being will not be complete but only partial. *The third method* is, you may remember, where we relate the perceiver to an All-perceiver, so that he may realise that he has no interests other than those of the latter. Here the consciousness that the perceiver is an insignificant part (Amsa) of the All-perceiver, his existence and interests being subordinated to those of the latter, will be persistent. As in the second method, there will not be complete identification but only subordination. *In the fourth method* however, we analyse the true nature of the perceiver by ignoring altogether the enveloping unessentials which endowed him with an individuality and make him therefore seem a 'perceiver' as distinct from the 'perceived', and we arrive at the final truth that there is but one entity, the Supreme Essence transcending all differentiation. As no other object truly exists for the 'perceiver' than his own such Essence, no further process of identification with any such object is possible or necessary.

6. All Methods Useful

To those of us who belong to the Dualistic or Semi-dualistic Vedantic Schools, which do not recognise this identity in its fullest significance, the last method is useful only in so far as it helps us to realise that we are separate from our bodies, our senses and our minds; it is therefore made an accessory to the other three paths. To the Advaitin however, who refuses to recognise any difference between you and me if we both cast off our individual characteristics, the last method is the only one that helps to realise the truth, the

other methods however being valuable accessories. To many of us, who are in none of these paths, all the methods are equally important. A competent guide to initiate us into and lead us along the path best fitted for our advancement considering our present temperaments and qualifications is, therefore a necessity. Whatever may be the difference in detail among the various schools, all of them, so far as we are concerned, recognise in us the inherent capacity for perfection and assure us that our effort alone is wanting to realise our own true and perfect state of the eternal, conscious bliss.

CHAPTER VII

THE BLISS OF THE SELF

1. THE FOUNTAIN OF JOY

There is a spring of joy perennial in the heart of every living being and the Vedanta gives it the name of *Atma*, the Self. Clothed though it is in a physical encasement, it ever seeks to assert itself and find expression even through it. It is this eternal spring that enables us to forget our past sorrows and to entertain hopes for the future. The seeking will cease to be only when the expression is full and perfect, unhampered and unlimited by any encasement. It is idle and fruitless to embark upon an enquiry as to when and how this limitation came into existence or came to be related to the essentially limitless. It is, on the other hand, very much worth our while to help the Self in its seeking to find expression even through the encasement and much more worth our while to help it in finding its fullest expression untramelled by the encasement.

Joy that seeks expression is therefore said to be twofold. More accurately speaking, the expression of joy is twofold, one limited by encasement and the other transcending encasement. The expression of joy limited by encasement is called *Abhyudaya*, the Relative Good; and the expression of joy transcending encasement is given the name of *Nissreyasam*, the Absolute Good. The expression of joy transcending encasement is, necessarily, of only one sort, for differentiation belongs only to the encasement. The expression of joy through encasement is of two sorts according as

that encasement happens to be the particular encasement we are now in or it happens to be another encasement which we have to occupy after this encasement has ceased to be. The former is called *Aihika* or the 'Here', and the latter *Amushmika* or the 'Hereafter.' The Vedic religion, aiming as it does at our welfare, has to tell us the means for the expression of joy in all these ways.

It will be useful if we consider for a moment the exact nature of our encasement. On the face of it, it would seem that our physical body of flesh and blood constitutes all our encasement. But a little more consideration will tell us that, even without that physical body, there is a capacity in us to experience in dreams and that therefore our personality subsists even when the physical body is forgotten. A still more deep consideration will tell us that sensuous experience is not a necessary function of ours as it is absent in deep sleep and that all the same the personality does subsist even then as is shown by our remembering the happiness of sleep which we enjoy at that time. We find therefore that our personality, though really one throughout all these three regions of experience, can yet be conceived of as threefold, first as conditioned by the physical body wherein the senses are awake, second as conditioned by the mind with its store of impressions, and third as conditioned by individuality alone which is remembered after waking. These three conditionings of the personality are spoken of as the Three Bodies, *Sthula* (Gross), *Sukshma* (Subtle) and *Karana* (Causal).

2. The Five Coatings

It is interesting to consider this from another standpoint. It is well-known that the life period of an individual

can be conveniently divided into several stages, each with a distinctive characteristic of its own. For the first few years after birth the only instinct is hunger and the only activity is to satisfy that instinct. If we give a child a ball or a knife, it will instinctively take it to its mouth; the rate of growth of the physical body is also very high during early years. After those years are passed and the child enters its boyhood, there is increased activity and the boy runs here and there with no apparent purpose except to give vent to the excessive vitality that makes its appearance then. When the boy becomes a youth, he is not merely concerned with food and exercise but cultivates likes and dislikes and wants to give expression to them in his relationship to the persons and things in the outside world so that he may have what all he likes and not what all he dislikes. After a series of experiences, especially disappointments, he realises somewhat that his own like or dislike is no criterion of the goodness or badness of things and he then desires to know about things as they are, unaffected by his own subjective colourings. The middle age is therefore an age of enquiry actuated by a desire to know the truth. When old age sets in, even knowledge does not seem worth striving after, for the call of the body and the mind is towards rest and peace. Thus the life-period of a man may be divided into five stages:—

1. Childhood, when physical growth and food stand out prominent.
2. Boyhood, when physical activity and exercise demand our attention.
3. Youth, when mind and its likes and dislikes want to have their full play.
4. Middle age, when the intellect and the desire to learn the truth are predominant.

5. Old age, when the body, mind and intellect seek rest and peace.

While referring to these characteristics of the five different periods of life, we only mean that they are predominant in those periods. They are not exclusive, for even a child, whose only instinct is hunger, has its own movements, its own likes or dislikes, its own curiosities and its own rest in sleep. Thus all these characteristics do exist in all the five stages, though each one finds accentuated expression at a particular stage. Our personality therefore may be conceived of as being clothed in five coatings which all are ever present with us but get prominence under certain circumstances or in particular periods of life. These coatings are known as *Kosas* and are given the name of

1. Annamaya Kosa, the food-made coating.
2. Pranamaya Kosa, the vital coating.
3. Manomaya Kosa, the mental coating.
4. Vijnanamaya Kosa, the intellectual coating.
5. Anandamaya Kosa, the blissful coating.

Taking our everyday experiences, we may say that all these five coatings are in full play when we are awake, that the coatings 2 to 5 are active in dreams and that the coating 5 alone is functioning in sound sleep. This classification will be found to be more comprehensive and fuller than the classification into bodies mentioned above. The encasement in which we hapen to be at any time may therefore be considered as made up of these five coatings.

3. Joy Under Limitation

The joy that takes its rise beyond the entire encasement but seeks to find expression through it has necessarily to share its imperfections and to be coloured by its characteristics. It

takes upon itself the imperfections and the characteristics also of the particular coating of the encasement through which it sheds its lustre. The joy as experienced in the physical coating is known as Health, in the vital coating as Strength, in the mental coating as Comfort, in the intellectual coating as Knowledge and in the blissful coating as Peace. Just as the same water gets the name of a spring, a stream, a cascade, a river, a lake or a sea, by reason of the limiting boundaries or particular movements which define or characterise it for the time being, so does the same joy get these various names.

It needs no saying that each one of such limited joys admits of an infinite variety and that each variety admits of infinite grades of depth and intensity. The Vedas whose main object is to help us to attain joy have to make provision for attaining even such limited joys according to the varied tendencies of the aspirants who seek them. Naturally therefore the portion of the Vedas dealing with such provisions is immense and variegated. The portion of the Vedas which deals with the attainment of unlimited joy which does not admit of any variety at all but is ever one, is, for the same reason, very limited in extent; and that portion is known as the Vedanta.

4. The Joy Supreme

The Vedanta does not at all concede that there is in essence any difference between sensuous happiness and the Bliss of the Self; it is only the latter that finds expression in the former, though under very limited and polluted surroundings. The Vedanta sees therefore no contradiction between sense experience and the realisation of the Self as some other systems of thought do. It no doubt lays emphasis upon the importance of renunciation as a pathway to a knowledge

of the Self, but at the same time grants such knowledge to King Janaka and others who lead worldly lives. To realise that a chair is only wood, it is unnecessary to smash it into pieces; but it may become necessary in the case of a person who is unable to ignore the chair-ship. Similarly, for the person who is sense-bound and is unable to realise that he is really enjoying the joy of the Self when it comes to him through the senses, it is quite necessary to segregate him, as it were, from sense-born joys. But such a process is not necessary for the person who sees only the joy of the Self everywhere. However, such a realisation is not at all an easy matter and is attained but rarely even after heavy ordeals and strenuous courses of training.

The Lord has prescribed for all time in His Vedas the methods by which one can secure limited enjoyments, limited by time or by a particular encasement, or by a particular coating in that encasement, or by any other circumstance; realisable here in this life, or in the lives hereafter; in this world, or in the innumerable other worlds as well as the methods by which one can secure, or rather regain, the joy supernal which has always been his. It is impossible to ignore or violate those methods and yet claim to have attained the same results. God has no doubt given us full liberty of action and it is also open to us to disobey His commands, but it is well to remember that He has reserved in His own hands the power of reward and punishment. May we therefore always have the faith and the strength to be guided by His words in our quest for joy, be it *Abhyudaya* (Relative Good) or *Nissreyasam* (Absolute Good). As this quest is with us every moment of our lives, we cannot afford to neglect His guidance even for an instant. Even in the very act of reposing in Him and submitting to His guidance, there is joy unspeakable.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SPLITTING OF THE SELF

1. PERSONALITY

It is a truism that each person has a personality. But it is rarely that we consider what are the elements that ordinarily constitute that conception. As we ordinarily understand it, we include in it everything that goes to make up the individuality of the person, that is, everything that makes him out as distinct from others. The worldly status of the individual, his dress, his body, his senses, his mind, his intellect and his inner Self — all these are clubbed together when we speak of his personality. Strictly and logically speaking, the personality of a person must consist of that essence in him but for which he will cease to be the person he is. A little introspection will make it clear that that essence has for its inseparable characteristic the capacity to know or experience. Thus it is consciousness that makes a person the person he is.

We will now see that the physical body and the senses are part of one's personality in so far as they do *know* the external world; however that they are no essential part will be clear from the fact that they in their turn are 'known' by the mind. We must therefore consider the physical body and the senses as a person only in relation to the external world. The mind again similarly knows the physical encasement and everything external to itself and is therefore a person in relation to them; but it is at the same time 'known' by the intellect. Similarly, the intellect knows the

mind and everything external to itself, but is 'known' by the inner Self. The Self knows the intellect and everything external to itself but is *not* 'known' by any other entity. Thus, the senses, the mind and the intellect are persons relatively to the things external to them but are non-persons in relation to the inner concepts, the Self alone being always a person and never a non-person. In other words, the senses, the mind and the intellect have each of them two aspects, the 'knower' aspect and the 'known' aspect, according to the standpoint from which we consider them, subjectively or objectively.

2. An Analysis

In ordinary everyday life, we lose sight of these two distinct aspects for, as already stated, we include in the conception of personality not only our inner Self but the intellect, the mind and the senses and the physical body as well and sometimes even our dress, our position in life, etc., so much so that we fail to recognise that there is an objective side to these additional factors.

To the philosopher, the Self alone is a Subject, the intellect etc. being but non-persons; therefore he ordinarily ignores the subjective side of the intellect etc.

Between these two extremes come the persons who do not lose sight of either of the two aspects and to whom they are of equal reality. These people again may be divided into two classes — those who attach more importance to the 'known' aspect and those who attach more importance to the 'knower' aspect. Again as there is nothing in this universe which has not two sides to it — the good and the bad — these two classes subdivide themselves into four,

according as the object of the knowledge is the good or the bad side.

Thus we arrive at a classification of people into six classes:—

(1) Those who *identify* themselves with their bodies, senses, mind etc. and are unable to conceive of them as distinct from the inner Self.

(2) Those who are able to perceive that their bodies etc., though distinct from the Self are nevertheless necessary adjuncts and form the *instruments* by which the Self is enabled to know and to enjoy and who are therefore unable to keep them off from contact with evil and allow themselves to be overpowered by them.

(3) Those who are able to perceive that their bodies etc. are but *instruments* in the hands of the Self and are therefore able to regulate their use for the purpose of knowing and enjoying the good and avoiding the evil.

(4) Those who are able to perceive that their bodies etc. are but *objects* of knowledge, but are unable to see anything except their good side.

(5) Those who are able to perceive that their bodies etc. are but *objects* of knowledge and see both sides of them, preferably the bad side.

(6) Those who are able to perceive that their bodies etc. are but *objects* of knowledge and see both sides equally indifferently and even as unrelated to the Self.

These six classes may be said to generally correspond to: (1) The Unthinking, (2) the Worldly, (3) the Selfish, (4) the Vain, (5) the Ascetic and (6) the Philosopher.

It is not our purpose here to make a detailed analysis of these classes of people. It will be sufficient to draw the attention of the reader to the exact place of the Vain in the scale of humanity. As it is, they do occupy a fairly high rung in the ladder. But it will also be clear that as they are not far removed from the Selfish, their position is not enviable, as they may at any moment slip into the next lower rung. Again as a result of its peculiar position between Selfishness and Asceticism, it is very difficult to classify Vanity either among virtues or among vices, for in a way it partakes of the characteristics of both; but we may generally say that Vanity is a vice when it leans towards Selfishness but is a virtue when it leans towards Asceticism.

3. Varieties of Vanity

We have defined the Vain as those who perceive only the good side of the 'known' aspect of their bodies etc. For example, the body in conjunction with the respective senses ordinarily *hears, sees,* etc.; the vain man will want it to *be heard well, to be seen well,* etc. We may state here at once that there are two varieties of vanity, according as it is himself or another that is sought to be made the hearer etc. The man of the first variety likes to hear himself, to see himself, etc; while the man of the second variety loves to make himself heard, seen, etc. by others. Let us consider some familiar examples.

Possessions: (1) The self-vain man will like to have good things about him and will derive pleasure from the mere possession itself. He is indifferent to the fact whether others know of his possessions or not. A crude example of this class is the miser.

(2) The other kind of vain man will be more particular about showing off the few good things which he possesses so that they may create in the minds of others an exaggerated conception of his possessions.

Sound: (1) The self-vain man loves to be always talking for he finds an inestimable pleasure in hearing his own voice. He is not particular about interesting his audience. It is enough for him that he is allowed to talk. In this variety may be included those who have a taste for singing or happen to have learnt some stanzas by heart and have got into the habit of humming to themselves; they are perhaps the most innocent of this class.

(2) The other vain man is always careful about what he talks. His diction, his expression, etc. will be well polished, for his ambition is to make himself heard well. He will not tolerate any inattention on the part of his audience, for that will stand in the way of his being heard well. As his main idea is to be himself heard well, he will generally be slack in attending to what others say and this may sometimes lead him unconsciously to talk on matters in which the audience has no interest; but he can always be brought back if the latter fact is brought to his notice.

Touch: (1) The self-vain man will be very careful about his body and his dress and will want everything about him, that he may have occasion to touch, soft and smooth. He will generally prefer silk to cotton and cotton to woollen for wearing. He will dislike coming in contact with dirty or hard or rough things and therefore be very fastidious in his habits.

(2) The other vain man will like to be touched by others so that *they* may know how soft his body or dress is. He will

feel extremely pleased if we tell him "How soft your hand is!" His habits will generally be the same as those of the previous class but in an accentuated form. It may be generally stated in this context that men as a class are predominantly of the former variety and women of the latter.

Form: (1) The self-vain man finds a peculiar fascination in gazing at himself in mirrors or in photographs. It will be difficult to convince him that his style of beauty is not exactly the highest. He will delight in beautiful dress, jewels and trinkets and will generally be neat and clean.

(2) The vain man of the other variety will find a higher pleasure in mixing in society where there will be opportunity for others to gaze at him. If he looks at himself in the mirror, it is not with a view to admire his own beauty but to form an estimate of how others will appreciate his appearance. His habits will not much differ from those of the self-vain man but he may sometimes resort to artificial aids to beauty and may not be particular about his personal cleanliness. As soon as a pillow case got dirty, a friend of ours used to turn it inside out and put it on the pillow; that the pillow will thereby get dirty was of less moment to him than that the visible side should *seem* clean. He belongs to this variety.

Taste: (1) We suppose that those who suck their thumbs or bite their nails belong to the self-vain class.

(2) We are not aware of any persons who like to be tasted by others except it be the mothers that suckle their children. But we have a suspicion that the desire to be kissed is a mild form of this kind of vanity.

Smell: (1) The self-vain man will be very particular about personal cleanliness and may sometimes use mild scents so that they may smell well to himself.

(2) The other vain man who wants to *be* smelt by others will use strong scents when he goes into society; personal cleanliness is only of secondary importance to him.

Mind and Intellect: (1) The self-vain man will think himself endowed with the noblest qualities and the keenest intellect and will generally be what is called 'self-conceited'. It will be difficult for him to conceive of a higher degree of perfection than his own; he may therefore lack such virtues as modesty, obedience, reverence and the like but will be very scrupulous in his own habits and conduct for fear of losing his own 'self-respect' or 'self-esteem'.

(2) As the aim of the other variety of vain men is only to make others think very highly of them, they will resort to ostentatious charity and high-flown disquisitions on morals and philosophy. Their private life need not correspond to their professions but they will be very careful to see that every appearance of acting up to them is kept up. The hiding of their own vices is more important to them than their avoidance.

Instances like the above may be multiplied indefinitely. But it is not possible to enumerate or even classify all the possible forms of vanity for there are as many varieties as there are objects of vanity in this universe and there are as many grades in each variety as there are individuals who have it. The objects of vanity are necessarily therefore infinite. Some years back, we heard of an 'ugly' contest in America and a 'Bald Head Club' in London. It may be safely stated that there is nothing in the universe which cannot be the object of vanity of somebody or other at some time or other. It is equally true to state that there is no man who is not vain about something or other. There are of course infinite shades

of vanity from the most gross to the most refined. But it cannot be gainsaid that vanity is universal from the highest of created beings to the lowest.

4. The Origin of Vanity

We do not know if any modern thinker has taken pains to find out wherefrom this sense of vanity has derived its power to envelop the universe and permeate it throughout. It seems that there has been some initial impulse even at the time of the creation of the universe and that there is therefore no escape from the effects of that primary impetus.

As stated before, vanity is the desire to make oneself 'known' or 'enjoyed' by himself or another, subordinating for the time the 'knower' and the 'enjoyer' aspect of himself. That is, in other words, the person who is ordinarily the 'knower' and the 'enjoyer' desires, when affected by vanity, to '*be* known' and to '*be* enjoyed'. The inner person, the Self, who is, strictly speaking, neither the knower nor the known splits himself, as it were, into two, the 'knower' and the 'known', to admit of the latter being known by the former. Vanity or self-love which necessarily requires a 'loving' self and a 'beloved' self is a result of this splitting process. We may not therefore be wrong if we say that we derive our capacity for self-love from the primal act of self-love in which the author of the universe engaged himself at the beginning of creation itself.

The Vedanta says that the Supreme Being was alone, one without a second. The Secondless One who was pure consciousness devised to 'cognise', but there was nothing else but Himself; so He had to cognise Himself; in other words, He made Himself the object of His own cognition. In Sri

Sankaracharya's inimitable words, "The Highest Self who was pure consciousness looked at Himself as Himself and became therefore the *I;* from that arose the root of differentiation" *(Prabodhasudhakara 95).* He desired to become the many. But as there was nothing beside Himself, He had to create the many out of Himself alone. This desire of the One to become the many, that is, of the undifferentiated to become the differentiated, seems to be inherent in any conception of self-love or vanity; and it will be impossible to frame a definition of the latter if we eliminate from it this desire to "split oneself". It may therefore be some consolation to us to know that the Supreme Being Himself is responsible for the vanity in us.

CHAPTER IX

VANITY AND ITS USES

1. THE BONDAGE OF VANITY

How or why or when the One without a second got the desire to become the many, is beyond our present scope. It is sufficient for the present to recognise that we can trace our vanities to the Absolute Himself and to realise that, as the capacity for self-love or vanity began anterior to the creation of the universe itself, it will not be possible to free ourselves completely from the bondage of vanity until we are able to dissolve the universe, that is, till we liquidate the 'many' and merge it into the undifferentiated One. If we have but faith in the Vedas, we can get from them all necessary and ample directions to help us to use our very vanities for attainment of a stage wherefrom we can, as it were, look down with amusement even at the Supreme Godhead entangling Himself in the desire to create, for such is the transcendent position promised to a true and practical Vedantin.

Students of the higher stages of Vedantic training will remember that the absolute dissolution of the universe is promised to the true knower of Brahman. If a cloth is burnt folded as it is, a passer-by who sees it may not be able to know that, though it retains its shape as a cloth, it is really no more a cloth; and he may desire to lift it up. The man however who has witnessed the burning will be quite free from the temptation to lift it, for he knows that it is now not really a cloth but only ashes in the form of cloth. The true knower of the Self is ordinarily compared to the latter

when it is required to describe his attitude towards the perceptible universe. The Advaitin however is not content to have that attitude as the highest attainable by a knower of the Self, for he says that the perceptibility of the universe, even though it be like unto a burnt cloth, must also disappear before we can postulate the *absolute* dissolution of the universe. He therefore accepts the possibility of vanity even in a knower of the Self until he has attained the stage of non-perception of anything other than the Self. To reach this stage, the Vedanta enunciates for the benefit of the knower of the Self two further immediate objects to be striven after:- namely, the elimination of association of ideas or tendencies (*Vasana Ksaya*) and the destruction of the thinking mind (*Mano Nasa*). Unless he engages himself in these two further courses, even the knower of the Self cannot be entirely free from vanity, for if in nothing else, he may find cause for vanity in his knowledge of the Self itself; and of all vanities this is the most dangerous as the potentialities of the knower of the Self are too great to permit of a chance of misuse.

If thus even the knower of the Self has to be warned against vanity, it needs no saying that all of us are immersed in vanity, though it may be that each of us differs from the others in having different objects of vanity or in the different depths or varieties of vanity. The wonder of our Sastras is in their recognising all these varieties and shades and in providing the appropriate means by which we can get rid of them even when we seem to give way to them.

For example, if any person is vain of his Brahmana parentage, the Sastras step in and say "Certainly you have every reason to be proud of your birth. Your Brahmana-hood

is assuredly a very good thing to posssess and we do congratulate you upon it. *But* do not forget that this precious gift of which you are so justly proud is after all only a gift and not an essential part of yourself and that you earned this gift by dint of good and virtuous actions in your past lives. Remember also that if you do not acquit yourself properly in this life in full consonance with the status of a Brahmana which has now been given to you, you will be losing your claim to it and you will be deprived of the object of your present vanity. We shall therefore prescribe for you the means by which you can retain your object of vanity and by which, if you so desire, you can earn for yourself more desirable objects of vanity." The Sastras thus proceed to prescribe the *duties* of a Brahmana.

That is, they couple every object of vanity with corresponding duties. According to the Sastras, the same sacrificial rite which a poor man can have performed at the expense of a few rupees must be performed by a rich man at the cost of thousands to yield the same result, for the duties are always proportionate to the range of vanity.

2. The Creative Power of Vanity

The Sastras always aim at utilising the sense of vanity as a convenient handle for the enforcement of a duty so that gradually the vain man may learn to subordinate and eventually forget his vanity in his sense of duty. But very often the man, perverse by nature, outwits the Sastras by utilising the duties themselves as convenient objects of vanity. If a gentleman is learned in the Vedas, the Sastras may prescribe that to justify his vanity in his own learning he must repeat certain Vedic texts daily in the local temple.

The object of such a rule is to make him benefit himself by the exercise of his own vanity. But the power of vanity is so supreme that, instead of doing the duty for his own benefit, he conceives of a *right* as against others to repeat the texts himself. He forgets the duty in his sense of vanity. The meaningless disputes about the 'rights' to a 'service' in a temple which disfigure our civil courts are the result of such a pervertion of the salutary rules of the Sastras; and they are vivid examples of the power of vanity to make out an object for itself even where there is none.

It is an astonishing fact that vanity is not content with even this creative power but sometimes makes out an object out of things of which one ought to be really ashamed. It makes him forget the shameful character of the object and substitute in its stead something to be vain of. This kind of vanity which makes one boast of a vice as if it were a virtue is primarily due to the social atmosphere that surrounds him. If a dozen gentlemen are lazily reclining in easy chairs and sipping coffee in the evening, it will be very difficult for one who happens to be in their midst to muster courage, enough to get up to perform his *sandhya*. But to attain a stage when he can boast of his non-performance of *sandhya* requires a further course of debasement primarily due to the company that he keeps. That is why the Sastras attach so much importance to *sat-sanga*, the company of the good. It is the Sanga or company that effectually shapes the aims and aspirations of an individual. The Sanga, by the influence of precept and example, will teach him what are the things of which he may be vain and what are the things of which he ought to be ashamed.

It may not be irrelevant to mention here that the modern fad of placating public opinion, whatever it may be, is one of the most suicidal of fads. The *sat* or the people competent to form and express a healthy opinion will always be few in every society and it will be dangerous to succumb always to the opinion of the majority for, more often than not, it is sure to be wrong. The aim of every individual ought to be to please the few good; if, in doing so, he is able to please the remaining many also, so much the better. But to aim at pleasing the many at the risk of displeasing the few good is certainly bound to be harmful. One is therefore allowed to be vain only of those things which command the approval of the good. What those things are he can learn from the Sastras and from association with the good. If he makes no attempt to acquaint himself with the former or to secure the latter, that only argues that he is not yet on the path of progress or even on the way to it.

3. Regulation of Vanity

Having thus in a general way attempted to realise that the function of the Sastras is the regulation and utilization of vanities for the betterment of the individual, it may be interesting to see which of the two kinds of vanity — the self-vain variety or the other — the Sastras are particularly concerned with. A consideration of the examples given above, will show that generally honesty and sincerity go with the man who is vain in himself and that they do not necessarily go with the man whose aim is only to show himself off. The former is under a mistake as to his own worth, the mistake arising from the partiality to oneself; the latter, however, deliberately sets about to misrepresent himself to others. The Sastras, intended as they are mainly for the guidance of sincere people who do earnestly aim at

progress, concern themselves therefore mainly with the former. The latter also may read the Sastras but they generally read them not for benefitting themselves by their advice but simply to show off their own learning, so that the Sastras themselves are made the objects of their vanity and can not therefore exercise their ordinary function of improving the individual.

Circumstanced as we are, it is impossible for us to get rid of vanity altogether. We may, however, limit our vanity to good things. We must also take care to see that we are only self-vain; that is, we must so regulate ourselves that we are able to command our own love and respect. If we stick to these two principles, it may be taken for granted that we will be thereby commanding the love and respect of the persons whose love and respect are really worth having.

4. An aid to Renunciation

Vanity may also be said to have an indirect use in that it may lead to renunciation in certain circumstances. Suppose a young man, who is inordinately vain of his own handsome appearance, is laid up with a severe type of typhoid fever or small pox which converts his handsome body into an ugly emaciated figure. If he then looks at himself in the mirror, he will be ashamed to realise that what he was vain about was capable of such a transformation for the worse. He may then learn the folly of being vain of such transitory things as the skin and the flesh. This new knowledge will be deep proportionately to the antecedent vanity. The man who was never much vain about his body can not get the spirit of renunciation to the same extent as the one who was very vain about it. The story of the rich Timon of Athens is an excellent example of the

truth that the depth of renunciation is really proportionate to the height of vanity that went before it. We may thus say that vanity wounded, offended or hindered, is one of the means of renunciation.

The true attitude of renunciation that arises on an intellectural realisation of the fleeting nature and impermanency and worthlessness of all objects keenly striven for is attainable only by very few. But, as vanity is present in every one of us in one form or another, we can easily find ourselves in circumstances where there is a likelihood of the vanity being pricked. If a man is vain of his learning, he must mix with people who are reputed to know more; if he does so, he will be losing his vanity in no time. If he is proud of his wealth, in order to acquire the spirit of renunciation he must either lose the wealth or get into the habit of looking at higher and more valuable things.

As already hinted, this entry into renunciation because of the vanity being wounded or obstructed is not a straightforward one. We must therefore be very careful to distinguish between the renunciation thus secured and the true renunciation. It is no doubt possible that the renunciation obtained in this way may be gradually converted into the true one; but the process is a very troublesome one in which the aspirant has to beware of very many temptations, for the spirit of renunciation, not being genuine but only induced by circumstances, may succumb at the slightest opportunity offered when the circumstances alter or there is an occasion to revive the offended vanity. For example, we are daily coming across people in their sick beds, who are unable to enjoy their normal pleasure, talking of the vanity of human wishes and showing a determined intention to reform their lives as soon as they recover from their illness;

and we know also how many of them keep to that intention when they are alright. They are as vain as ever and their renunciation ranks only with the honesty of the thief who finds nothing to steal. But all the same it is perfectly possible to make even that transient spirit of renunciation permanent by dint of sincere and steady exercise in discriminative thinking. It can not be denied that every one of us is having such moments very frequently in our lives, but it is only a very few that utilise them as convenient steps in the path of spiritual progress.

CHAPTER X

THE DOCTRINE OF ONENESS

1. THREE EQUATIONS

The reader who has followed us hitherto, nay even a casual observer of the world around him, will recognise that the universe consists of an infinite number and variety of factors which fall automatically under either of these two categories: the *Experiencer* and *Experienced*. All experience assumes that there is somebody who experiences and that there is something to be experienced. In other words, the phenomenon denoted by the verb 'experience' requires and presupposes an entity which can figure as the nominative and another entity which can figure as the objective. The former is called the Soul and the latter Matter. Simpler still, the former is the *I* and the latter is *This*. The aim of all philosophy is to find out the essential nature of the *I*, to find out the essential nature of the *This* and to find out the exact nature of relationship between the two. Happily for us Hindus, our philosophy is not an endless groping in the dark nor a tangled network of guesses. It is founded on the solid rock of Revelation, the Veda, the highest of all Pramanas or guides to right knowledge.

The Vedanta, the sublimest and highest peak of the Veda, proclaims in unmistakable terms that the essential nature of the individual soul is Brahman the Absolute, *Ayam Atma Brahma*, and that the essential nature of all Matter is also Brahman the Absolute, *Sarvam Khalu Idam Brahma*. If $A=B$, and $C=B$, A must be equal to C. Is then the essential nature of the individual soul identical

with the essential nature of the material world around? Even so is the Truth, proclaims the Sruti. *Thou* (the essence of the soul) *art That* (the essence of the universe.) *Tat Tvam Asi.* Thus Hindu philosophy, particularly the Advaita system, deals in order with these three equations.

(1) I the Soul am Brahman.

(2) All This is Brahman.

(3) Brahman, the essence of the soul, is identical with Brahman the essence of the All.

The truth of the first equation can be realised if we ungrudgingly and mercilessly analyse the ordinary conception of the soul. We started with defining the soul as the Experiencer, the *I* in us. *Who am I?* is therefore the province of this equation. The process of trying to arrive at an answer to this question is known as *Pancha Kosa Viveka,* separating the real *I* from the five coatings which screen it.

The truth of the second equation is realised if we equally unhesitatingly probe into the essence of all things that are experienced. *What is this?* is the province of this equation. The process of trying to get an answer to this question is known as *Pancha Bhuta Viveka,* separating the substance of the universe from the forms created by the five elements and their combinations which prevent it from being perceived.

The third equation equates the answer to the first question with the answer to the second question. Once the two processes mentioned above are complete, it is not a far step to the realisation of the identity of the real *I* with the substance of the universe.

2. WHO AM I?

The question "Who am I?" starts with the basic assumption that *I am*. Otherwise the preliminary question "Am I?" will have to be answered before the other question can possibly arise. But nobody, not even the maddest or the most ignorant among us, ever puts himself the question, *Am I?* The doubt arises therefore only in the *Who*. A doubt can arise only when there is the possibility of two or more answers to a single question. The question "Who will win the race?" is possible only when there are more entrants than one. If only a single person offered himself for the race, there could be no race at all, much less any question as to the who about the winner. Is there then many a candidate who offer themselves as the answer to the question, *Who am I?*

The Eye, the Ear, the Mind, the Leg, the Hand, the Body, etc. all claim to be the *I* severally in expressions like *I* see, *I* hear, *I* think, *I* walk, *I* grasp, *I* sit, and so on. The *I* has a different significance in each one of these sentences but all the same we persist in using the single word *I* as the nominative in all these sentences. If the *I* is really a seer, it can not be said that the *I* hears; if the *I* is really a hearer, it can not be said that the *I* talks. The *I* then must be something capable of figuring as the nominative in all these sentences without being subject to the liability of being confined for ever to any particular predicate. It assumes to itself, as occassion arises, the function of being the nominative of any kind of predicate like seeing, hearing etc. This extraordinary claim to function in various ways only proves that the *I* is in its essential nature neither a seer, nor a hearer etc. Really therefore the process of answering the question "Who am I?" is the process of ascertaining

who all I am *not*. In other words, the misequation of the *I* with many things which are not really *I* has to be got rid of before we can realise what the *I* is.

As the world consists of only two categories, the *I* and the *This*, the many things which are not really *I* but with which the *I* is misequated must necessarily belong therefore to the category of *This*. Thus the need for an enquiry into the *Who am I?* arises only because of an antecedent misequation of the *I* with *This*. It is this misequation that is given the name of *Adhyasa*. The still further antecedent negative *non*-equation of the *I* with the real *I* (Brahman) is known by the name of *Avidya*. The aim of the Vedanta is to help us in the elimination of these obstacles, one positive and the other negative, which stand in the way of our realising our own Self.

3. What is This?

Similarly, with reference to the objective universe of Matter, the enquiry into "What is This"? starts with the basic assumption that *This is*. Otherwise there will have to be a preliminary enquiry "Does this exist?" The perception of any thing, be it the most evanescent or the most illusory of things, coming under the category of *This* is impossible unless it *is*. The Vedanta does *not*, as some mistakenly suppose it does, deny the existence of the universe. In fact, nobody in his senses can do so when every moment of our lives it is making itself felt so persistently. The universe *is*, is the basic fact on which the enquiry starts. *What* is it that exists as the universe?, is the real question.

This question also is possible and legitimate only because more answers than one offer themselves to solve the problem. Really therefore the process of correctly answering

the question, "What is This?", is the process of ascertaining what all are the factors with which *This* has misequated itself. We will find that the *This*, when it is not misequated with the *I*, is misequated with Name and Form which have really no substance. This antecedent misequation of the *This* with what it really is not, or with what has really no claim to be called *This*, necessiates an enquiry into "What is This?" and is known by the name of *Aropa*. The still further antecedent *non*-equation of *This* with the real *This* (Brahman) which is responsible for this misequation is called *Maya*. The aim of the Vedanta is equally to eliminate these two obstacles, the one positive and the other negative, which stand in the way of our perceiving Brahman in the universe.

4. The Supreme Power

As the conception of *I* and the conception of *This* are both relative and interdependent and therefore exist and disappear simultaneously, it is usual to club together the positive obstacles above mentioned, namely Adhyasa (subjective misequation) and Aropa (Objective misequation) and conceive of them both as the creation of a common paramount power of misequation called *Vikshepa Sakti*. When so doing, it is usual to club together also the corresponding negative obstacles above mentioned, namely Avidya (subjective non-equation) and Maya (objective non-equation) and conceive of them both as the creation of another common paramount power of non-equation called *Avarana Sakti*.

Generosity, the capacity or the quality of being generous, is present in an individual always, whether at any particular moment of time he is actually helping another or not. When he is seen to be helping, his generosity is kinetic

and is therefore perceived. When he is not helping, it is only potential but it can not on that account be said not to exist. Being a part of his nature, it is not distinct from him; we can never see generosity in the abstract apart from the generous person. Still it is not identical with him; for, unlike the person who is perceived whether he shows himself generous or not, his generosity is only sometimes perceived and at other times not. It is therefore not distinct from him and yet not identical with him.

Such is Maya, the supreme power of Brahman. She is not distinct from Brahman nor is she identical with Brahman. She makes herself felt when she becomes kinetic and at other times remains indistinguishable from Brahman. In the words of the Vedanta, Brahman the potential is *Suddha* (Pure) and *Nir-guna* (Quality-less); Brahman the kinetic is the *Mayavi* (wielder of Maya) and is *Saguna* (quality-ful). Strictly speaking, Brahman can not be called really Suddha (pure) when potentiality can be postulated of it for potentiality is itself a quality; but to understand the subject it is not necessary to stick to such nice distinctions.

5. The Absolute

The Supreme Absolute Truth is Pure Brahman transcending all limitations created by Maya. But it has to be known only through the Saguna (quality-ful). Gold by itself has no shape or form of its own. It does not mean that it is impossible to know what gold is. We can never see gold unless it puts on some shape or form. It does not mean that gold is essentially shapeful or formful. On the other hand, we come to know what gold is, only when we see a large number of shapes which gold takes on various occasions and when we have learned to dissociate those shapes from the essence of gold.

So with the soul and the matter. We must note the ceaseless variety of forms which they take and learn to dissociate those forms from the essence of the soul and of matter. We will realise that essence is one and one only. This is the teaching of the Vedanta. It does not teach the absurd doctrine of the identity of *two* distinct things. It simply denies that there are *two* things. The ultimate Reality is *Advaita,* Two-less. The Vedanta does not preach that the soul *and* Brahman are one, or that the universe *and* Brahman are one. It asks us simply to score out the false *and*. When the *and* goes, the plural predicate *are* automatically goes and the need for postulating that they are *one* automatically disappears. Only the nominative remains; but without a predicate there can be no sentence nor will there be any justification any longer to call the nominative a nominative at all when there are no other correlated factors. The Supreme Truth therefore transcends all sentences, all words and all expressions, nay even all mental concepts.

Such, in brief outline, is the doctrine of oneness as enunciated in the Vedanta. In the sequel, we shall try to understand, again in brief outline, the several practical steps leading to its realisation.

CHAPTER XI

'PERSONS' AND 'THINGS'

1. FOUR STEPS IN THE VEDANTA

It has been pointed out more than once before that we can easily recognise the existence of the two distinct entities which between themselves exhaust the whole of creation: *persons* and *things*, that we are taught by our Srutis the existence of a third Supreme Entity which comprehends and transcends both the former, and that the highest goal taught to us is the realisation in actual experience of our absolute oneness with that Supreme Entity. This realisation can be made possible only in successive stages of practical training. To become a good man one must practise goodness. To become an engineer one must practise engineering. We shall proceed to consider in some detail the successive stages in the realisation we have in view before us. They are:—

i. Realisation of the distinction between '*person*' and '*thing*'.

ii. Realisation of the identity between '*thing*' and the Supreme Entity.

iii. Realisation of the identity between '*person*' and the Supreme Entity.

iv. Realisation of the absolute truth that the Supreme Entity alone is real, and not '*person*' or '*thing*' *as such*.

2. Person Analysed

We shall begin with a consideration of the first stage or step in the Vedanta. This will show us how far off we are even from the very first step. It may seem at the outset that no elaborate demonstration is necessary to make us realise the distinction between a *person* and a *thing*, for you and I who are *persons* are certainly distinct from the table and the chair which are *things*. But, a scientific and logical investigation cannot stop with such broad distinctions. An analysis of the *person* as commonly understood and of the *thing* as commonly understood has to be undertaken with a view to ascertain if all the elements which we commonly associate with a *person* or a *thing* are essential to and inseparable from the same.

We shall first analyse the *person*. In saying I am a *person*, I ordinarily include in the *I* my physical body, my senses and my mind. It must be seen if my physical body, my senses and my mind are necessary components of the conception of a *person* as applied to myself. We must apply to each of these the definition of a *person* with which we began. Does the physical body know or enjoy, or is it, on the other hand, known or enjoyed? It is plain that the physical body is an inert mass of flesh and bone which cannot know or enjoy without the help of the senses of perception and action and is known and enjoyed by the latter as the object of their knowledge and enjoyment. The physical body is thus only a *thing* and our first conception of it as a *person* is incorrect. It would now seem therefore that the senses together are the real *person* in me. It will be going against direct experience to grant a distinct personality to each of the several senses; for, I know that I am but a single person, the same entity

that saw, that also heard and so on. Again, I know that my eye sees, my ear hears and so with the other senses. Further, the eye sees good things and bad equally indifferently, but *I* know that the things are either good or bad and enjoy them and so forth accordingly. This *I* that knows the sight of the eye and enjoys it is the mind. Thus the senses are known and are enjoyed while the real knower and enjoyer is only the mind. The senses are therefore *things* while the mind would seem to be the *person*. Now, again, we know that the mind is sometimes clear and sometimes confused; we feel that the mind is sometimes spirited or joyous, sometimes dull or melancholy. The mind is thus known and felt by a still subtler entity. That subtler entity would seem therefore to be the *person*, while the mind also is but a *thing*. We are not aware of any other entity which knows or enjoys this entity. We may therefore conclude that this is the real *person* and that the mind, the senses and the physical body are *things*.

Again, though we began by saying that you and I are *persons*, you will realise that your physical body, your senses and your mind are as much *things* as my own. If I can be in any way related to you, it must be only through your physical body, senses or mind, for I cannot perceive your inner Self; so that, you are virtually a *thing* so far as I am concerned. In the result, so far as I am concerned, the inner Self in me is the only *person* while the rest of the whole of creation are but *things*. Similarly to you, the inner Self in you is the only *person*, the rest of creation being but *things*.

Though we have thus arrived at the conclusion that the Inner Self alone is the *person*, and that all else are only *things*, we perceive this distinction only in theory, and we have yet to realise this distinction in direct experience.

3. Religion is Philosophy in Practice

The days of rank materialism which refused to recognise the soul as distinct from the physical encasement are, we should think, long gone by, though there may still be a few here and there who stick to that doctrine. Materialism as a philosophy professing to define the soul as a quality of or emanation from the body is dead. But materialism as a practical religion still holds sway over the generality of mankind. However much we may realise intellectually that we are distinct from our bodies we forget that fact when, say. a thorn pricks our foot. The practical identification of ourselves with our bodies is so complete that we cannot unconcernedly look upon the prick as a phenomenon unrelated and external to us. And yet that ought to be the logical attitude of the person who realises his distinctness from the body. The attainment of that attitude is the purpose of religion. Religion may therefore be defined as philosophy in practice. It is by the practice of religion that one can learn to realise in actual experience the truths of philosophy. Philosophy by itself is but mere intellectual satisfaction if it is unallied to religion. But unfortunately religion, any religion, is not given any importance these days. There is also an attempt to confuse religion with philosophy so much as to say that religion must stop with a declaration of the truths of philosophy and that any practices prescribed by it are not the necessary elements of religion. If that were so, there need be no difference between one religion and another, as the truths of philosophy are ever true whether taught by this religion or that. In fact, some people are seriously bent upon removing this difference in the hope of being able to establish a homogeneous philosophical brotherhood. But, as we said, the best

they can bring about is only an intellectual brotherhood which accepts certain truths of philosophy, but it will be impossible to make all the members of it *realise* the truths to the same extent, as realisation depends upon the environments they have been brought up in, the pre-natal tendencies ingrained in them, the nature of the training they have been placed under and so many other circumstances. That is why Sri Sankaracharya throws open the possibility of intellectual grasp of the abstract truths of the Vedanta to all, while he at the same time lays great stress upon the necessity of following the religious observances prescribed for the various Varnas (castes) and Asramas (life-stages).

Without practically undergoing the courses of training prescribed for each individual, it is impossible to expect to realise the ultimate truths. We, who profess to admire the intellect of our ancient sages who conceived the sublime philosophy of the Vedanta, belittle at the same time their intellect when they prescribe the means to realise that philosophy. Inconsistency cannot go further. Today Sir Oliver Lodge is acknowledged to be a great man, but he is considered a mono-maniac when he begins to talk of life after death. Such is our mental attitude. We want to believe in and obtain all the good things promised, but we refuse to believe in and practise the means prescribed for obtaining them.

4. Identification of 'Person' with 'Thing'

Before we consider the practical training courses laid down in our religion, it will be necessary to consider the extent and nature of the identification between the Self and the non-Self — the *person* and the *thing*. The identification

of these two cannot, strictly speaking, be called an 'identification' at all. It will be more accurate to call it the non-perception of distinction between the two; for, a positive act of identification of one thing with another presupposes a knowledge of the distinctness of the two things.

For example, if we met a gentleman dressed in a grey suit a week back and we now see before us a gentleman dressed in orthodox Hindu fashion but with the same features as of the former, we will be able to identify the latter with the former. When we do so, both the dresses, the one seen the other day and the other seen today, will be present before our mind, but we will be able to discard the distinction made by the nature of the dress and realise the identity of the wearer by the more important characteristic of similarity of features. Identification therefore is possible only in cases where the two things sought to be identified are really the same in essence but appear as distinct owing to extraneous causes which clothe them with distinct attributes. Such an identification is not possible between a *person* and a *thing;* for, as we said, the essentials of a *person* are *to be, to know* and *to enjoy* and the essentials of a *thing* are *to be, to be known* and *to be enjoyed,* and these essentials are not mere extraneous attributes which may be discarded or ignored so as to admit of an identification between the two.

Let us take another example. Suppose I see a dark upright object about six feet high suddenly appearing before me one dark night on the highroad. It may be a lamp-post, but I may mistake it for a robber and become terribly afraid of it. When I see the robber in the upright object, it cannot be said that I *identify* the robber with the lamp-post; for, no sane man would do it, as he would know that a robber

and a lamp-post are essentially distinct from each other and that the distinction between them is not merely due to extraneous unessential attributes. Further, I must remember the lamp-post and have it before my mind at the time when I have to identify it with the robber, just as we remembered the gentleman in the grey suit when we saw the gentleman in the Hindu dress before us. But the fact is that even the idea of a lamp-post does not strike me when I mistake it for a robber. In fact, it is the non-perception of the lamp-post that is responsible for the perception of the robber. The phenomenon may be shortly explained in this way. A lamp-post is a tall upright object made of stone and surmounted with a lamp. A robber is a tall upright figure with a human frame of flesh and blood. The darkness of the night diminishes my capacity for right perception and so, instead of seeing a tall upright object, made of stone and surmounted with a lamp, I see only a tall upright object. My cowardly tendencies clothe this tall upright object with a notional human frame of flesh and blood. And I at once see a robber before me. Thus, first arises a non-perception of the lamp-post as such coupled with a perception of *only some* of its features like its tallness and uprightness. Then the tendencies of the perceiver amplify this semi-perception into the full perception of a different object altogether — the robber. This is not a case of conscious identification, but only of ignorant non-perception of the truth. The identification that we mentioned above between *person* and *thing* belongs only to this category. A *thing* exists, is known and is enjoyed. Ordinarily, owing to our ignorance we do not perceive all these three characteristics but only one of them viz., the *thing's* insistent existence. The tendencies long ingrained in the perceiver

make him mistakenly clothe this mere perceived existence with the other two attributes of 'to know' and 'to enjoy', which belong really to a *person* and not to a *thing*, so that the perceiver actually comes to regard a *thing* as a *person*. As my ignorance of the lamp-post, coupled with my tendency to fear, manufactures for me a robber out of the lamp-post, so does my ignorance of the exact nature of a *thing*, coupled with my tendencies, manufacture for me a *person* out of the *thing*. We thought it necessary to introduce this digression here as we wanted to make ourselves clear that, even when we speak of 'identification' between *person* and *thing*, we use that word not to signify the 'perception of non-difference' between them but really only the 'non-perception of the difference' between them.

5. Identification Twofold — Appositional and Possessory

Now, to return to our subject, the identification between *person* and *thing* may be conveniently considered as twofold according to the intensity of the identification. We may call one variety the *appositional* and the other the *possessory*. The possessory identification getting intense has always a tendency to develop itself into appositional identification. The advocate in his chambers discussing with a client about the quantum of remuneration to be paid to him feels distinctly and unmistakably that his own interests which prompt him to demand a high fee are not those of the client, whose object is to obtain his services for as low a fee as possible. He knows and feels that the client before him is a distinct personality with distinct interests, even adverse to his own. The moment the fee is settled and paid down, the client becomes the '*my* client' of the advocate, and the advocate of

the moment before becomes the '*my* advocate' of the client. This transformation which enables either or both of them to claim a possessory right over the other is the result of the feeling of identical interests created in them by their mutual contract. The advocate will be sorry if his client loses his case, and the client will resent anybody else characterising his chosen advocate as incompetent. A further transformation takes place when the advocate goes before the judge for representing his client's case. When he is pleading for the life of his client, he may now and then feel as if his own life was at stake, and he will carry this identification so far as to speak in the first person while he really means only his client, not himself. That is, he will forget for the moment that his client is a different individual. This intense identification which makes the relation of 'his' disappear, we call appositional identification. In Sanskrit phraseology, this is called *Ahanta,* '*I*-ness', while the less intense possessory form is called *Mamata,* '*my*-ness'.

As the realisation of the absolute distinction between *person* and *thing* is incompatible with any confusion of the one with the other, the aspirant who seeks to obtain this realisation must learn to overcome and transcend both the varieties of identification above referred to. There are several methods by which he can do so. But, before we consider them, it may be useful to give some more examples to illustrate this identification between *person* and *thing.* It is the familiar assumption of every one in this world to include the physical body, the senses and the mind whenever he speaks of himself. We shall therefore start with the universally accepted notion of appositional identification between the real *person* and his encasement. But nobody seems satis-

fied with this universally seen '*I*-ness'. The gentleman affected with short sight will put on a pair of gold-rimmed spectacles and coolly assert "*I* see this book" unconsciously including in that *I* the gold-rimmed spectacles, which are essentially *things*. When another uses a stick to beat a dog with, he says "*I* beat the dog" though really it is the stick that comes into contact with the dog. When a large number of masons, carpenters and other artisans are really responsible for the raising of a structure, the owner says "*I* built this house". When it is really the soldiers that fight a battle and win it, the General asserts "*I* fought the battle and was victorious." We mention these illustrations to show that, next to the identification with the body, the least noticed of identifications with things external even to the body is with the instruments or agents through which the person functions. If we draw his attention specifically to the instruments or agents, the spectacles, the stick, the artisans and the soldiers, he will begin to think of them as separate from himself, and the identification will have become diluted into the notions of '*my*' spectacles and so on. More thinking will be required to perceive even intellectually that the '*my*-ness' is not an inseparable attribute of the instruments, that the latter are in essence unrelated to him and that it is his own mind that is responsible for this superimposed possessory relationship. It will therefore be necessary to consider how the things which are essentially distinct from ourselves manage to become the object of our '*my*-ness' and later on of '*I*-ness' itself.

CHAPTER XII

MISTAKEN IDENTIFICATION

1. PERSON CANNOT DESIRE

It is a truism that the desire to possess a thing arises out of a feeling of incompleteness without that thing. Desire therefore can arise only in a person who feels himself incomplete for want of the object desired. An entity, whether a *person* or a *thing*, cannot be wanting in any of the *essential* characteristics which go to make up that entity; for, if it is so wanting, it must cease to be that entity. A *person* therefore ought to be perfect in his essence. When he seems to want something to give him perfectness, we have to conclude that it is not the real *person* that wants it, for he is always perfect, but that either the *person* has forgotten himself so far as to think himself imperfect, or somebody else is masquerading as that *person*. Suppose I have a friend whom I know to be very rich. I see him one day begging in the streets. As I know him to be rich and above want, I must seek for a rational explanation of the actual act of begging in which I see him engaged. Either of two possibilities will present itself to me. My friend may have, by a curious failure of memory brought on by madness or some other cause, forgotten that he was actually rich and had no necessity for begging. Or, the man that I see before me may not be my friend at all but somebody else in the disguise of my friend. Both these possibilities are in a way present when a *person* desires something. The *person*, whose essence is eternal perfect bliss, by the operation of a curious madness called *Avidya*, thinks himself imperfect and begins to desire. Or, intellect, the

subtlest of *things* and the most intimate instrument of the *person*, is arrogant enough to put on the garb of the *person* and masquerade as such, so much so that we think that the *person* wants a thing when it is really the *intellect* that wants it. The deeper the madness of Avidya, the more revolting will be the masquerading. When a person is so steeped in Avidya as to think himself imperfect without the gratification of sensual pleasures, he begins to desire them. The physical body and the senses with the mind, which actually require those pleasures, taking advantage of the ignorance of the person within, presume to show forth their own requirements as the requirements of the person.

The desire to possess a thing is therefore always preceded by a mistaken identification of the perfect want-less person with an imperfect entity. If I desire to put on a shirt to keep myself warm, I identify myself at the instant of desire with my physical body. The real *I* in me is indifferent to heat or cold, but my body is certainly subject to all that. It is the requirements of my body that I seek to satisfy by that desire, even though mistakenly I speak of keeping *myself* warm. As the desire to possess precedes actual possession and as the desire to possess is the outcome of a sense of imperfectness and as this sense of imperfectness is again due to a mistaken identification with a non-person, it will be clear that all our wants arise only out of our wrong identification of the real *I* with the *non-I;* in other words, by a mistaken sense of *I*-ness in things which are not *I*.

2. Thing cannot Desire

Again, a *thing* cannot be wanting in any of the *essential* characteristics which go to make up that *thing*, for, if it is so

wanting, it cannot be that *thing* at all. A *thing* therefore, just as in the case of a *person*, ought to be perfect in its essence. When it seems therefore to want something else, we have to understand that its essential nature is for the moment eclipsed by another entity. A door is a *thing*. It *is*, it *is known* and and it *is enjoyed*. Nothing more is wanted to make it a *thing*. But there arises an occasion when we say that the door *wants a bolt*. The door by itself does not want anything of that sort. It is really a want felt by the owner of the door for its more convenient enjoyment by himself, and by a curious transference of ideas the want of the owner is ascribed to the door. My physical body unrelated to the mind or senses is an inert thing of flesh and bone and can know no pleasure or pain, heat or cold, and yet we say that the body requires clothing to keep it warm. In fact, the body is indifferent whether it is cold or warm and therefore does not want at all anything for itself; but the owner of the body wants to keep it warm for his own convenient enjoyment. But, instead of saying that he wants to keep the body warm for his own sake, he says the body requires warmth. Thus, by considering these and similar examples, it will be seen that, even when a thing seems to want to possess something else, this want is not really of that thing but of a subtler conscious entity who tranfers his own sense of want to that thing.

3. Who is it that Desires?

From the foregoing paragraphs we are able to deduce as follows:—

i. That a *person* is perfect in his essence and does not want anything else to perfect himself.

ii. That, when a *person* seems to want anything else, he is not a *person* pure and simple but one mistakenly identifying himself with a non-person *i.e.* a *thing.*

iii. That a *thing* is perfect in its essence and does not want anything else to perfect itself.

iv. That when a *thing* seems to want anything else, it is not a *thing* pure and simple but one mistakenly identified with a non-thing *i.e.* a *person.*

Thus we arrive at the result that no *person* or *thing* can ever want, much less have a desire to possess, something else and that the only entity who can have that desire is a composite entity who by a mistaken identification of a *person* with a *thing* partakes of the nature of both and yet is not strictly either of them. Such truly is the nature of a *Jeeva* (Individual Soul).

4. 'THING' ANALYSED

We started with an enunciation that a *thing* is an entity whose inseparable and essential characteristics are that *it is, is known* and *is enjoyed.* We also indicated that, though we might provisionally take it that a book and a table are *things,* we would have occasion to consider later on if these examples were correct. We shall do so now before we launch into the discussion of the means by which the composite being, the Jeeva, can learn to find his essence in the perfect bliss of the Self by discarding the two varieties of mistaken identification with the *thing* viz., the *I*-ness and *my*-ness.

While analysing the *person* it was said that, as I *hear* when related to my *ear, see* when related to my *eye* and so on, and as I am cognisant of my own hearing etc., the real *I*

in me — the true *person*, the knower and enjoyer — is not the eye or the ear or any of the other organs but one who is the common experiencer through all these. We shall have to adopt the same line of analysis while dealing with the thing. Suppose I have a mango in my hand. The mango is certainly a *thing*, but is it the whole mango or only a portion of the mango that I can logically call a *thing*? Our definition of a thing was that *it is, is known* and *is enjoyed*. But do we know the mango *as it is* and do we enjoy it *as such?* We should think not. We know nothing of the mango except that it is soft to the touch, yellow to the eye, sweet smelling to the nose, sweet to the tongue and will fall to the ground with a thud if dropped. That is, we cannot define what it is unless we relate it to one of our organs of perception. Its softness, yellowness and all cannot be its essential characteristics as they make themselves felt only when in relation to particular senses of the perceiver. The essense of a mango is therefore something which transcends its softness, yellowness etc., but takes on these qualities when brought in contact with the appropriate senses of the perceiver. But the difficulty is in getting at that something. It is difficult for us as we are at present circumstanced to obtain knowledge of any thing except through the instrumentality of our mind and senses. The same woman is the daughter of her father, the wife of her husband, the mother of her child and so on. The father, the husband or the child cannot unconcernedly look upon her as a mere woman but must needs augment that conception with another based on the relationship to himself, his mind or his senses. In other words, whenever we seem to know a *thing* we do not know it simply as it

is but with some extraneous attributes lent to it from our own personality. The *thing*, therefore, as we ordinarily know or enjoy it, is not the *thing in itself* but a composite entity made up of the *thing* in itself as the basic substratum and a superstructure which does not really form any essential attribute of the *thing* but is a contribution from the knower or enjoyer.

5. The Imperfect Thing

As pointed out before, a real *thing*, as much as a real *person*, is perfect in itself and cannot want anything else to make it perfect. But it is the experience of every one of us that *things* have the tendency to become the properties of particular individuals and thus become possessed by *person*. The essence of a *thing*, as we have repeatedly mentioned, is to be known, to be enjoyed. It will be really taking away from that essence to limit the knowledge and the enjoyment to a particular *person*. A *thing* therefore, when it tends to become the property of a particular *person*, is not a *thing* pure and simple but with a limitation or imperfection added to it by the *person* seeking to possess it. This attribute of imperfection which attaches itself to a *thing* before it actually becomes the property of a *person* is called 'desirability'. A further stage of imperfection is reached when it becomes actually 'desired'. The true nature of the *thing* becomes still further obscured when it is actually possessed by the *person* so as to become the object of his *my*-ness. We have already mentioned that an intensification of this *my-ness* leads on to the stage of *I*-ness itself *i.e.* a stage of absolute non-perception of the distinction between the *thing* and the *person*.

6. Stages in the Identification between Person and Thing

We may better explain the above through a parallel presentations of the main stages of this confusion between the *person* and the *thing*:—

1. I am a *person*.	1. This is a *thing*.
2. I am a physical body.	2. This is a jewel.
3. I am imperfect without a jewel.	3. This jewel is desirable.
4. I desire to have a jewel.	4. This jewel is desired.
5. I work to obtain the jewel.	5. The jewel is striven after.
6. I obtain the jewel and hold it in my hand.	6. The jewel is possessed by a *person*.
7. I wear the jewel as a part of my body and feel perfect and happy.	7. The jewel becomes part of the *person* and is one with him.

To get rid of this confusion between the real *person* and the real *thing* we shall have to retrace all these stages thus:—

i. I can get rid of the identification with the jewel if I realise that I can hold it in my hand as the object of my possession.

ii. I can be free from this sense of possession if I do not make any effort to obtain the jewel.

iii. I can cease to make any effort if I do not desire to have the jewel.

iv. I can not desire to have the jewel if I give up the idea that the jewel is desirable and will make me perfect.

v. I cannot have the idea that the jewel is desirable and will make me perfect if I realise that I am not the imperfect physical body.
vi. I can realise that I am not the physical body if I get rid of the non-perception of the true nature of myself and of the *thing*.

We shall find that each one of these stages is fully taken account of and provided for in the Vedanta system of practical training.

7. Our Present Position

We have already said that the perception of the absolute distinction between *person* and *thing* is but the first of the four steps towards the realisation of the absolute monism of the Vedanta. A consideration of the various stages we have just now enumerated as necessary, to be passed even in that first step, will reveal to us the immeasurable distance that lies between us and the absolute truth of the Vedanta. Most of us would scorn to be called materialists, that is, those who do not recognise *persons* as distinct from *things*. But we would like to know how many of us can conscientiously say that they are above the vanity of taking up a mirror when they put on a nice turban or a watch chain and of exclaiming to themselves: "How nice I look!", absolutely forgetting for the moment that what really looks nice is the turban or the gold chain and not they themselves. It would therefore be only presumptuousness if any of us should say they are qualified even for the first stage of the first step. Then what shall we say of their talk about the absolute truths of the Vedanta as the guiding factors in their lives *at present*?

CHAPTER XIII

TRAINING FOR PERCEPTION OF DISTINCTNESS

1. SENSE OF IDENTITY

(i) Now we shall consider in some detail each one of the six stages in the first step that we mentioned towards the close of the last chapter. The first stage is, it may be recalled, when we have to dilute the sense of absolute identification into that of possession. Instead of saying "*I* look nice" we must learn to say — "*My* jewel looks nice". This can be brought about in one of these two ways, either by a thoughtful consideration of the true status of a jewel with respect to myself, or by substituting a different thing as the object of the identification. I will get to a realisation that the jewel is not myself but only mine if I realise that the jewel is a physical object with which I can do what I like, or if I identify myself with the physical body without the jewel. It may seem at first sight that there is no practical difference between the two methods, but in fact the first method is the more difficult of the two as it requires thought and as its object is the extinction of the much cherished sense of identification. The second method does not want us to extinguish the *I*-ness but only says that it will furnish us with a different object to lavish our *I*-ness upon. The final result of the two methods is the same, but the second method is the easier one. We may say that the first method is against the current and the second is with the current. The distinction between these two methods will be made clearer as we consi-

der the further stages. We shall now at once proceed to the second stage.

2. Sense of Possession

(ii) The sense of possession will be destroyed if we do not make any effort to possess the thing. The tenacious hold which a person has over his hard-earned money is sufficient proof of the fact that the sense of possession is proportionate to the effort made to obtain the thing. The ease with which a pleasure-seeker parts with his unearned patrimony is another example of the same fact. It is well known that the mother has a deeper love for her child than the father. That is because the mother's effort to bring the child into existence is far more than that of the father.

This sense of possession also can be got rid of in either of the following two ways; one by ceasing altogether to make an effort to get it, the other by substituting another thing as the object of the effort. If I keep a jewel in my box and do not make any attempt to take it in my hand, I will in course of time begin to forget that I have a jewel. I will also forget that I have a jewel if my energies are engaged elsewhere. The first is the method of *abnegation*, the second that of *diversion*. Naturally, the method of abnegation is more difficult than that of diversion. We have mentioned the mother's love for her child. It will be very difficult for her to attempt to love her child less and less till she loves it not, as that will be going against the current. Suppose however she is pregnant once again and in course of time becomes the mother of another child. The effort in bringing forth the second child is a matter of recent experience, while the effort pertaining to the first child is a thing of distant memory; the later effort

therefore looms larger in the eye of the mother, and the result is that the sense of possession over the second child is more intense than that over the first. She therefore loves the later born more than the first born. That is, her love for the first born has lessened owing to the fact that another child has taken the place of the former in her affections. But no mother will willingly consent to have her love for her child lessened. That is just the difference between the two methods.

3. Jnana and Karma Margas

We may state here once for all that our Sastric system prescribes both the methods leaving it to the aspirant to choose either of them according to his own qualifications and tendencies. The methods prescribing the process against the current in all the stages can be comprehensively brought under what is called 'Jnana Marga'. The with-the-current process is called 'Karma Marga'. The former method is certainly the more logical, scientific and effective; but circumstanced as most of us are, that method is for us the less fitted one now, and it is the privilege of only a very few to be able to follow it. The Karma Marga is more adapted to our tendencies and qualifications and does not require any effort up the current, and it is therefore the more practicable one for us.

4. Sacrifice

Now, let us turn to the question before us. We have said that the sense of possession is obscured when the effort is diverted to some other object. It is a curious fact in the ordination of God's universe that if we want to exert ourselves for obtaining a particular object, we *must* part with

something of what we have already got, before we so exert ourselves and irrespective of the result of our exertion. We can find no better parallel than our University which demands an application fee for any examination that the student may wish to undergo. The student may not afterwards be permitted to sit for the examination owing to some defect in his term certificate. The student may attend the examination but may not answer the question papers. He may answer the question papers but the examiners may not find his answers satisfactory and he may find his name in the list of failed candidates. But the University rule is inflexible: "In no case will the fee be refunded". Such also is the rule in the universe. God is not such a bad trader as to have any credit system in His shop. He could at least be content to have cash down on delivery. But no. He knows his customers too well to trouble himself about them, unless He has positive evidence of their earnestness to obtain the things desired in their readiness to deposit a premium. It is a condition precedent to our raising crops that we should first sow the seeds. Our sense of possession over the seeds must give way to permit of our exertion to obtain the crops. We cannot say "I will part with the seeds after I am sure of the harvest". If we want our money to double itself by the accumulation of interest, we must part with the money and pass it on to the possession of a needy debtor. We cannot tell him "Bring me the double of my capital seven years later and I will pay you the money then". We will have to part with the money now and take the risk as to his repaying or not repaying with interest later on. We cannot hug to ourselves whatever we have got and at the same time exert ourselves to obtain more.

5. Activity Classified

The Hindu Sastras utilise this fact as a handy opportunity for the aspirant to get rid of his sense of possession. They prescribe proper activities by engaging ourselves in which we will be able to rid ourselves of this possessary sense. The activities are various, and have to be various, in view of the varied nature of the tendencies and qualifications of the aspirants and of the varied depths and kinds of their sense of possession. As we have said, all fruitful activities do require some sacrifice of our present possessions. The function of Sastras is to define the activities and prescribe the sacrifice required for them. In so doing they classify activities in general under two main heads: those which help the aspirant in his progress towards the realisation of the truth and those which take him farther and farther away from it. The former the Sastras commend and prescribe, the latter they condemn and prohibit. The former are called Injunctions and the latter Prohibitions. It is true that in both these classes of activities there is to some extent the abandonment of the sense of possession but in the prohibited activities the abandonment is not complete and that sense is only in abeyance and not extinguished. Suppose somebody tells me that I am ugly. If my identification with my body is as usual complete, I will at once resent the observation and I may be foolish enough to slap him on the face for that remark. If he is equally spirited, we shall be fighting with each other in no time. If one analyses my mind at the time of fighting, one will find that I do not care a bit whether my body receives the blows of my opponent so long as I am able to give him some blows. That is, in my effort to injure my opponent, I would lose the Mamata over my body so far as to risk its being actually

hurt. Please remember that I expose the body to actual physical hurt to give vent to the resentment engendered by a mere intangible wordy attack upon it. This loss of Mamata at the instant of fighting is undergone only for the purpose of vindicating the Mamata itself, so that, whether I win or lose in the fight, the Mamata will reassert itself with greater force as soon as the restraint is withdrawn. This explains why the greatest criminals sometimes rank with the greatest saints in the extent of the sacrifices made by them; the difference only lies in the nature of the intentions and the activities which demanded such sacrifices.

6. Object of Activity

That the object of the Sastras in prescribing certain activities is only to get a reduction in Mamata may be seen from the fact that the greater the extent of Mamata the more numerous are the activities prescribed, the greater the possessions the greater is the sacrifice required. A consideration of the several activities themselves is beyond the scope of this short presentation. We may however mention that in the noblest of activities prescribed, as in the meanest of them, this element of abandonment of Mamata is ever prominent. A Yajna has its important ritual in the actual oblation to the Deity sought to be pleased thereby. But no amount of "This I give to Indra" will make the oblation perfect unless it is followed by the significant words "No more mine".

Having so far considered the second stage of activities, we shall now pass on to the third stage of desire.

7. Regulation of Activities

(iii) A cessation of activities will be brought about by
9 stopping the desire that necessitated them for satisfying itself.

The suppression and final extinction of desire will certainly be the most effective means, but, as observed already, it is beyond the competence of most of us who must be content to tread the easier path, Karma Marga. The latter does not attempt at once to dam up desire but seeks to divert it into a different channel or limit it to a particular channel. Suppose my servant is working under me only with a desire to get the few rupees that I give him for his pay. If another should offer him a higher salary, he would certainly desire *that* in preference to his present pay, and the result will be that his working under me will cease. Suppose again my servant in his enthusiasm to serve me engages himself in all sorts of activities thereby intruding himself where he is not wanted or where he may injure himself, I may have then to tell him "Limit your activities to such as I prescribe. You need not fear that your pay will be any the less for such limitation. On the other hand, I will reward you if you acquit yourself well in those duties which I prescribe." Such again is the function of our Sastras. They recognise that, as long as the basic confusion of the *person* with the non-person, called Avidya, is not completely gone, it will be impossible to put an end to the activities of the aspirant. They therefore take upon themselves the function of regulating those activities. In doing so, the regulation is so arranged that the activities themselves in course of time help the aspirant on to the higher stages of non-desire. An unmarried man desirous of sexual pleasure may consider and look upon all women as fit objects of enjoyment and may exert himself for the satisfaction of his desire. The Sastra steps in and says "You will only be hurting yourself if you engage yourself in such activities. Your desire to have sexual pleasure is certainly

legitimate. I shall prescribe for you a method by which you can have that desire satisfied and which at the same time will benefit you morally and spiritually. Undergo the ceremony of marriage with a particular woman and live with her". A poor man seeing rich people apparently enjoying manifold pleasures desires wealth and engages himself in all sorts of activities to obtain it. The Sastra intervenes and says "If you commit deceit, robbery or other such acts for obtaining wealth, you will be injuring yourself. Give up those activities. I will prescribe for you other non-injurious methods by which you can obtain wealth. In following the methods that I prescribe you will, in addition to obtaining the wealth, be profiting yourself otherwise also". This regulation of activities with a view even to the ultimate abandonment of desire is, we may say, the sole function of the Karma Marga Sastras. We have mentioned that the activities are regulated by diversion into a different course or by a limitation in the particular course itself. When the Sastras adopt the former method they are said to prescribe (Apurva) and when the latter method is adopted they are said to restrict (Niyama). In either of these methods the desire to obtain the object is already there. The Sastras do not create the desire but only prescribe beneficial methods of satisfying it. If, for example, they give the command "One who desires heaven shall perform Yajna," it is not at all their object to compel any one to perform Yajna, much less to compel him to desire heaven. That the main object of the Sastras in prescribing such activities is not the satisfaction of the desire itself but really a cessation of that desire, is shown by the fact that, even while prescribing the activities, they attach greater importance to "desireless action" than to mere "desire-full action" and also by the fact that

even in the case of the latter they insist on the observance of the formula "Let this be dedicated to Brahman" at the end of the action or Karma.

8. Regulation of Desires

(iv) We shall certainly be putting an effective stop to the desire for a particular thing if we realise that the thing is not really desirable. But it would require a considerable amount of self-control to get such a realisation when we have so long accustomed ourselves to look upon it as desirable. While the Jnana Marga therefore wants to inculcate in us non-desire or Vairagya in the thing by exposing to us its faults and its undesirability generally, the Karma Marga seeks to wean us away from the object desired by tempting us with higher objects of desire. We shall not have to explain this process as it is the experience of every one of us that we are ready to give up desire for any particular object if by doing so we shall be able to get another thing more desirable. The money kept in the box of a neighbour may seem more desirable than the small sum in my own, and I may be willing to part with the latter if I am guaranteed my neighbour's money. But if I give full scope to that desire and begin to act under its promptings, I shall soon find myself in the criminal jail. There arises therefore the necessity for regulation of desires for telling us what are the desires to a fulfilment of which we can legitimately aspire in view of our present situation. The Sastras accordingly inform us what things are legitimately desirable and what are not. As the desirability or otherwise depends not on the thing itself but on the capacity of the aspirant to work for it and the facilities that he has for working and also on his capacity to enjoy it, it necessarily follows that what is desirable for a particular person

may not be so desirable for another and may even be undesirable for a third. That is why the Sastras are so particular about the *Adhikara* of any person to do any act for the satisfaction of his desire. If I am healthy and thirsty, a tumbler of cold water will be necessary; if I am healthy but only tired, the cold water may not be necessary but it may be desirable; if I am healthy and not even tired, the cold water is unnecessary but it can do me no harm; but if I am unhealthy the same cold water, which was necessary, desirable or indifferent to me according to my several conditions, will become positively harmful and I must not be allowed to take it even if my throat is parched with thirst and I clamorously call for it. It is this *Adhikara-bheda* or difference in competency that is the basis of the Hindu systems of Varnas and Asramas.

The Karma Marga, by promising us higher pleasures in the life to come or even in this life, induces in us a sense of relatively higher desirability in them than in the things actually desired by us now. The aspirant who has learnt that the pleasures of heaven are more desirable than the best that can be obtained here will naturally give up the desire for the latter and aspire to obtain the higher pleasures. The universe is composed of an ever-ascending ladder of pleasures even unto the highest step where the aspirant can enter the region of the Creator Himself and claim near equality with him. As the Karma Marga does not seek to extinguish desire but only substitutes higher and higher objects of desire, even in the highest region, the Satya-loka, the aspirant still retains his aptitude for desire though he may not desire such small things as we are apt to. The still higher state of non-desire is strictly speaking a negative state; but to influence the aspi-

rant to pass to that lofty state he has to be taught in the words of his own familiar vocabulary that the state of non-desire is more 'desirable' than even the pleasures of Satya-loka and that the latter are but an infinitesimal fraction of that supreme pleasure or blissful happiness. Thus far alone is the Karma Marga competent to take the aspirant.

9. Sense of Desirability

(v) The abandonment of the sense of desirability cannot be brought about by any such cajoling process as has been found possible in the previous stages. Only the process of analytical thought, the Jnana Marga is now open to us. It attacks the problem from both the sides by suggesting for our analysis the two questions "Am I imperfect without the thing?" and "Can the thing make me perfect?" and answers both the questions in the negative. As we have already touched upon these questions and may have occasion to consider them again, we shall now pass on to the next stage.

10. Sense of Distinctness

(vi) The sense of imperfection in the *person* and the sense of competence of the *thing* before him to make him perfect, which are respectively due to a mistaken identification of the real *person* with an imperfect non-person and to a mistaken investiture of the mere *thing* with extraneous attributes borrowed from the *person,* can disappear only when the mistake disappears. And the mistake will disappear only when the true nature of the *person* and of the *thing* as such as separate from each other, is actually realised; and they *are* seen, in our study so far, to be really distinct from each other; in fact so distinct that there can be no relationship between them. Thus we have arrived at the end of the first step to-

wards the realisation of the truth of the Vedanta. It may be remembered that the three further steps are the realisations of the identity of the *thing* with the Transcendent Being and the identity of the *person* with that Being, and finally of that Being alone being absolutely real, and not *person* or *thing*. When we are considering these steps we will find that, though we have been talking of the absolute distinction between a *person* and a *thing* as the highest stage of the first step, this absoluteness is only relative and that the truth is that, so long as the *person* retains the sense of *I* in himself and *this* in the *thing*, he is not free from a touch of the *thing* or non-person and that, so long as the *thing* retains the attribute of *this*, it cannot be unrelated to a *person;* so that, logically speaking, the *person* and the *thing* can never remain unrelated to each other and, if they should attempt to break off that relationship, they will cease to remain as *person* and as *thing* but will merge into a Common Essence of which we cannot say that it knows or enjoys, for these are the characteristics of a *person* alone, nor that it is known or enjoyed, for these are the characteristics of a *thing* alone, but of which we can predicate only that it *exists*, for that alone is the common attribute of *person*, and *things*.

CHAPTER XIV

LIMITATION OF THE SUPREME

1. CHARACTERISTICS OF 'THING'

In the foregoing pages we have stated more than once that the characteristics of a *thing* are *to be*, to *be known* and to *be enjoyed*. The latter two characteristics may, for our present purpose, be more conveniently described as the power of producing knowledge and the power of giving enjoyment, thereby giving them a positively active form instead of describing them as mere passive attributes. It will be clear that in doing so we are not clothing the *thing* with any fresh characteristics but only looking upon it from a different standpoint. Instead of saying "I see this table", we will now say "this table comes under my vision." Instead of saying "I like sweets", we will now say "the sweets give me pleasure." That is, the passivity is transferred from the *thing* to the *person*. It is more convenient to have it so, as we are not now considering the *person* as he is; and if we refer to him it is only because he is acted upon by *things*.

2. DIFFICULTY OF DETACHMENT

At the end of the first step, by realising the absolute distinction between *person* and *thing*, we were able to perceive that the *I* in us is *person* and every other entity which can be called by the word *this* is *thing*. In arriving at such a realisation we had to strip a jewel of all its attributes, of its desirability and the like, and finally even of its jewel-ness so that we might realise in it a mere thing. It will now be

seen that to the aspirant who has passed the first step every object in the world will be a mere thing having no kind of relation to him, as long as he is able to keep up the realisation of the distinction before him, but which may at any time exercise its potential power of generating cognition or enjoyment in him if he is a little careless. His position will be, say, like that of myself if I were to be suddenly transported to the thickest market square in New York. I would be a complete stranger to every one there and I can have no kind of relationship with any. But, for aught I know, each one of them may be a potential benefactor or a potential pickpocket. If I am weak enough to engage myself in the slightest conversation with either, my relationship with him will become cordial or just the reverse as the case may be. In either case I must bid farewell to my first sense of absolute aloofness and unrelatedness. Similar is the position of the aspirant who seeks to retain his aloofness even while in the midst of *things*. But the aspirant has to pass this stage some time or other, before he can realise his final goal.

3. Distinctness Analysed

Before we mention the various methods by which he can do so, it will be necessary to consider some preliminary questions. We observed that the aspirant has now reached a stage when every object external to himself will appear as a mere *thing*. But to him there will be as many mere *things* as there are objects in the universe. That is, the universe will seem to him a collection of innumerable distinct *things* having relation with one another, though unrelated to himself, the *person*. But, if we ask him what it is that makes one thing distinct from another, he cannot logically reply that one is a mango while the other is a diamond, for by our

hypothesis he has passed beyond the stage of such differentiations and has come to realise them only as mere *things*. He may say that the distinctness is due to the several *things* occupying several spaces, or existing at several times. If he does so, he will be only adding to the attributes of a mere *thing* the attribute of occupying a particular place or existing at a particular time, thereby importing into the definition of a *thing* two extraneous notions, viz., those of time and space, which are really dependent more on himself than on the *things* themselves. (We would be digressing far away from the subject on hand if we begin now to describe the true nature of the two conceptions of time and space. It will be sufficient, we think, to mention that they do not form any essential attributes either of a *person* or of a *thing*, but arise only when there is a non-perception of the distinction between 'person' and 'thing', bringing up in the rear its several notional consequences). The logical aspirant therefore should say that a *thing* is distinct from another because each *thing* has inherent in itself a distinctness from every other *thing;* in short, the two are distinct because they *are* distinct. Thus, according to the logician there are two elements in everything — one which characterises it as a *thing* and the other which distinguishes it from every other *thing*. The former it shares with every other *thing;* the latter is exclusively its own. For example, if we consider a particular cow, the logician says that the conception of the cow is made up of two elements, 'cowness' which is found in all cows including the particular one now before us and 'particularity' which appertains to it alone. The former is technically called Samanya or 'class', the latter Visesha or 'distinct'.

4. No Distinctness in the Essence

The Advaitin, however, is more logical than the logician. He refuses to recognise such an analysis; he says that

if we strip the cow of the colour, shape etc., of its horns and other external characteristics there will be nothing remaining which will distinguish it from any other cow. In other words, what makes a particular cow distinct from another is not anything inherent in the essential nature of the cow itself; the distinction perceived is due only to differences in the external attributes which do not form the essence of the cow. The Visesha or distinctness is not in the essence, but only in the attributes. Again, the conception of cowness cannot be had separately from that of a particular cow. It is wrong therefore to characterise cow-ness as only one of the elements which constitute the essence of a particular cow. In fact, it is *the only element* which makes it a cow. The Advaitin therefore brushes aside the above artificial analysis into *Samanya* and *Visesha* and boldly proclaims that there can be no real difference between one thing and another if both are reduced to mere *things* by the process described already. He proceeds further and says that there is in the universe really *only one thing* which appears split up into several things owing to several extraneous causes. To him, the whole category of what we call *things* is not really a category but a single entity appearing as many. The single *thing* must necessarily have for its essential characteristics the three essentials of a *thing* viz. Existence, Power of producing knowledge, Power of giving happiness. As the Advaitin's conception of this *thing* transcends all limitation which will make it appear as many, this supreme *Thing* is conceived of as having these three characteristics also unqualified by any kind of limitation. The Vedantin is confirmed in his conception of such a transcendent *Thing* by the divine teachings of the Srutis in passages like "All this is verily Brahman", "There is not the slightest severalty here".

5. Some Problems

We have mentioned that the essential characteristics of this Supreme *Thing* are *to be, to shine* and *to please,* untrammelled by any limitation. The question remains, what is the necessity for this Supreme *Thing* to submit itself to limitation so that it may appear as several distinct things? And what is the process by which this limitation is brought about? What is again the nature of this limitation itself?

It will be well to remember that we are considering now the second step towards the realisation of the Ultimate Truth, this step being the realisation of the identity of the *particular thing* with the Supreme *Thing.* We set aside therefore the realising aspirant as an entity independent of the *thing,* and we are considering only the experience of that onlooker. He retains his own persistent individuality and it is he that seeks to cognise the Transcendent *Thing* which comprehends and is above all particular things. We have therefore to see if that Transcendent *Thing* can be the object of his knowledge or enjoyment if it persists in retaining its essential characteristics which are beyond all limitations. We will have also to see if the person can cognise or enjoy that Transcendent *Thing* even *as it is.*

6. What is Creation of the Universe ?

We have already shown that a *person* by himself is perfect and that if any desire seems to arise in him he is for the moment confusedly mistaken for an imperfect entity. So, if we want to conceive of the *person* as desiring to know or enjoy the Supreme *Thing* and as engaging himself in the process of knowing or enjoying the same, we have to take it that the *person* so desiring and acting is not the *person,* pure and simple, but one identified with an

impure encasement. Again, if we want to conceive of the Supreme *Thing* as an *object* of knowledge or enjoyment, we must clothe it with sufficient attributes which will make it possible for the imperfect *person* to cognise or enjoy it. These attributes are as various and innumerable as are the varieties and degrees of imperfection in the person. The process of obscuration of the Supreme *Thing* by degrees of imperfection and limitation due to the attributes superimposed on it by the degrees of imperfection and limitation in the cognising and enjoying *person* is familiarly known as the creation of the universe. A consideration of that process will be incidentally necessary for understanding the practical steps taught in the Vedanta for getting rid of the perception of differentiation in the universe.

7. There can be no When, How or Why of Creation

As the first seed of differentiation in the Supreme *Thing* is coeval with the first seed of imperfection in the perceiving and enjoying *person*, it will be futile to discuss the exact date when the differentiation began. A conception of the beginning of creation, as is the conception of time itself, is possible only for the imperfect *person*. To be able to witness the actual beginning of creation, the witnessing *person* must have been existing even from before that beginning. The imperfect *person's* existence being synchronous only with that of the imperfect *thing*, the only *person* that could witness the creation actually taking place must be the perfect *person;* but by the very reason of his own perfectness he cannot witness the creation, for the creation cannot arise so long as he remains perfect. It will therefore be only mere waste of energy if we should attempt to answer the

question:— *When* was the Universe created, or in other words, *when* did the Supreme *Thing* first become subject to limitation or imperfection?

The same reasoning will show the futility of trying to discuss the similar problem:— *How* did the Supreme *Thing* submit itself to differentiation? For, we cannot conceive of a possible witness to that process. The perfect *person* sees no differentiation and cannot therefore perceive any process of differentiation; the imperfect *person* cannot also perceive that process as he himself can not exist before that process.

The Advaitin therefore does not trouble himself with the when, how or why of creation, and if he touches upon these topics he does so, not with the object of solving these insoluble problems, but only in order to persuade the imperfect *person* to conceive of the possibility of a Transcendent Thing which is free from limitations of all kinds. On another occasion we referred to the instance of a person mistaking a pillar for a thief. To the knowing person it is a pillar, to the mistaken one it is a thief. Can anybody tell us, *when* did the pillar *become a thief?* To the knowing man, *never;* to the mistaken man also *never,* for to him it has always been a thief. So with the Supreme *Thing*. To the perfect person, the Supreme *Thing* is always free from differentiation and the idea of creation will be meaningless to him. To the imperfect person, the Supreme *Thing* has been subject to limitation always and there could not have been a creation even from *his* stand-point. The Advaitin calls the principle of differentiation *Maya*. To the perfect person *Maya* does not exist; to the imperfect one it always exists. In other words, to the perfect person the differentiated universe does not exist; to the imperfect the universe

is beginningless. The same answers also solve the problem of 'why'. Again, can you tell me *how* did the pillar *become* a thief? To the knowing person this question will be meaningless as in his view the pillar remains a pillar and has not become a thief. The mistaken person also cannot explain the process, for he did not perceive a pillar slowly transforming itself into a thief; the thief was seen the instant the perceiver was subject to the mistake.

8. True Worth and Meaning of the Creation-Texts

But, accustomed as we are to discussing the when, the how and the why of things, we require an explanation of the when and so forth of the first seed of differentiation itself in the Supreme *Thing;* otherwise we are unable to have a positive conception of the nature of the universe. As we have said, these problems do not trouble the perfect person who sees no differentiation in the Supreme *Thing*. To the imperfect person's 'when', the Advaitin answers that the differentiation (Maya) is beginningless, *Anadi*. To his 'why', the Advaitin answers "Because of *your imperfectness* (Avidya)". To his 'how', he says "It is inexplicable, *Anirvachaniya*." If the pupil is unable to catch at once the significance of even these teachings, the Advaitin teacher stoops lower down from his standpoint and begins to talk of a *time* when the universe was not and *how* it was created, with a view to finally convince the student of the higher truth of the former teachings. To take again our now familiar example, if I see a thief in a pillar, a friend of mine may tell me of a time when I did not see the thief in the pillar with a view to make me believe that I may be under a mistake and finally make me realise that there is really no thief but only a pillar. Again, he may tell me

"You actually see only a tall object before you. To make you afraid, the tall object slowly emerged out of the darkness and in doing so it first became possessed of two legs, then of two hands, then of a whole human frame and then finally put on even a threatening aspect. Will you go near the thief? I promise he will not injure you. Will you then analyse his appearance? Having got near, do you not think that the threatening aspect is slowly disappearing? Approach still further. Do you not find that the limbs are beginning to resemble less and less the human limbs of a thief?" While my friend is thus slowly taking me on to a realisation of the pillar itself and the disappearance of the thief from the pillar, I may ask him "I actually see a thief before me. But you tell me that it is not really a thief. I am willing to take your word, but I shall thank you to explain to me the true nature of the thief that I *do* see". He will have to reply "I cannot deny that you *do see* him. He is not therefore non-existent. But the truth is that there is no thief. He is not therefore existent. The thief that you do see is therefore neither existent nor non-existent. What is actually before you as truly existent is a pillar, not a thief. Firstly, the real nature of the pillar was obscured in darkness and it appeared merely as a tall object. It became afterwards endowed with human limbs etc., all contributed by your imagination, until finally a thief was actually *created* out of it".

So with the universe. The Supreme *Thing* transcending all limitations allowed, as it were, its true nature of transcendence to be obscured, and it became possible to predicate of it the qualities of limitation. The Supreme *Thing* may now be said to have this power of obscuring or limiting itself. This power is called 'Maya'. The imperfect person, while actually engaged in the process of knowing or

enjoying, will be found identifying himself with his instruments of knowledge or enjoyment, viz., the mind and the senses (during the waking state) or the mind alone (during thinking and in dreams). The Supreme *Thing* therefore, to be capable of perception or enjoyment by the imperfect man, must exercise its power of limitation and become fit for grasping by the mind and the senses. The highest conceptions that the mind can grasp are abstract qualities like nobility, goodness and so on. The senses cannot grasp such abstract qualities, but can have only impressions of external attributes indicative of such qualities in the basic entity. For the *Supreme Thing* therefore to become the object of the mind and the senses, the limitation has to take the shape of a particular quality and a particular sensuous form. The Vedanta thus speaks of name and form as the limitations of the Supreme *Thing*. The variety of the things in the universe is due to the differentiation brought about in the Supreme *Thing* by the superimposition of Names and Forms, the nature and the multiplicity of differentiations depending upon the nature and the mutiplicity of the imperfectness in the perceiving person. The Supreme *Thing* conceived of as the object of the sense of hearing becomes *Akasa;* as the object of the sense of touch it becomes *Vayu;* as the object of the sense of vision it becomes *Tejas;* as the object of the sense of taste, it becomes *Apas;* as the object of the sense of smell it becomes *Prithvi*. We have preferred to retain the Sanskrit expressions as there are no corresponding English ones which will accurately convey the ideas. As the result of the mixture of these primitive differentiations in varying proportions this concrete universe is born.

CHAPTER XV

CONCENTRATION

1. HOW TO GET OVER DISTINCTNESS

Having made an attempt to understand how the Supreme *Thing*, the One Undifferentiated Entity, came to be perceived and enjoyed by the imperfect person as split up into several distinct *things*, our next endeavour should be to ascertain the process by which these several distinct things themselves may be perceived and enjoyed as one with the Transcendent *Thing*. We need not say that the process must be exactly in the direction opposite to that of creation. By this process we must be enabled to reduce gradually the variety of differentiations perceived until finally all differentiations disappear. That is, we must learn to discard the variety of Names and Forms in the attempt to find out the Essence that underlies all of them. But that is as difficult to do as the discarding of the mind and the senses themselves. The Vedanta therefore tackles this in a practical manner and prescribes more than one method which the aspirant is left to choose from according to his qualifications and tendencies.

2. THE DIRECT METHOD OF JNANA

The straightest and most logical method is certainly that which asks the aspirant to analyse the *thing* before him, realise that its name and form are but unessential attributes, and finally realise its essence which is beyond name and form, absolutely unconditioned and boundless, and therefore one with the Supreme *Thing*. This is the path of Jnana, the most difficult of the paths, for it requires an

amount of detachment and power of discrimination which is the privilege of only a few aspirants to possess.

3. The Indirect Method of Upasana

The other method, that of Upasana or devotion, is simpler though not so direct. Suppose I touch a table with the tips of my fingers. An ant crawling on the table will encounter five distinct obstructions. It will see five distinct things and be held back by them. If we credit the ant with the capacity for reasoning analysis, it will realise that each one of these five things, has many characteristics in common e.g. temperature and the like. The ant may be persuaded to admit that these common attributes are found in all those distinct things probably because of their being related to or forming parts of a higher thing beyond the ant's present power of comprehension. Once this idea of the possibility of the thing before it being an aspect of a higher thing enters the mind of the ant, the ant will be filled with the ambition to know the higher thing. But it cannot know it as at present situated except as an inferential possibility. We must therefore persuade it to cling firmly to *one* of these distinct things and ascend up that thing, the finger, till it actually realises the higher common thing, the hand. Once the ant gets upon the hand it will cease to wonder at the five distinct fingers which obstructed it, as it will have then realised their oneness with the hand, though they were distinct from one another.

4. The Method Explained

Similarly, if I see a rose and a book which are seen distinct from each other, my first attempt should be to find out if there is any similarity between them. I cannot see the book (to describe the process in our modern way)

unless rays of light pass thereform to my eye; so with the rose. So, they both share in common the quality of emitting rays of light. They may therefore be presumed to form but different aspects of a higher thing whose quality is emission of light. The rose sends forth a particular smell; the book also smells though in a different manner. They may therefore well be but different aspects of a higher thing whose quality is smell. The rose has a peculiar taste; the book also may be tasted. We can therefore predicate a higher thing whose quality is taste and which finds expression in the rose and the book. The rose and the book if dropped down are both capable of producing sound though not in the same manner and may therefore be related to a higher thing whose quality is the production of sound. The rose occupies space and so does the book. They may be conceived of as parts of a higher thing whose quality is the occupation of space. That is for each quality which we perceive as common between two things we may postulate a higher thing which possesses that quality though not exactly in the form that is found in those two things. As the number of things in this universe is practically infinite and as the number of common qualities between any two or more of them is therefore also infinite, the higher things that are responsible for these qualities have also to be infinite. But the qualities can be conveniently grouped under several classes as those which can be perceived by the eye, those which can be perceived by the ear and so on. If we do so and place several qualities, say, redness, greenness etc., under one class, namely, 'colour', we may postulate that the higher things which made things look light red, rose red, pink red, deep red and so on are themselves but aspects of a still higher thing whose quality is only colour and not redness or any other special colour.

And so on by generalising the qualities into more and more comprehensive conceptions we shall be able to reduce the number of things to as few as possible. It will be useful to mention in passing that if we are able to conceive of a higher thing as distributing itself into several minor things, we must also be able to conceive of the higher thing as being present more prominently in some of the minor things than in the others, for the minor things among themselves are distinct from one another.

5. The Devas

The idea underlying the course of Upasana prescribed in the system of Vedanta may be said to correspond to what we have been trying to explain above. There are as many Devas or Spiritual Entities as there are qualities in the world. There is a Deva who presides over the colour of greeness, who permeates all things green, and who makes them appear as green. But for that Deva nothing in the universe can be green. That green Deva himself is but a limb of a higher Deva who is above all kinds of colour and is mere light. This Deva of light, though present in and permeating all things that are *seen,* is predominantly present in the solar orb. The solar orb is therefore sometimes called the Deva himself, though strictly speaking the solar orb is but one of the numberless places where the Deva manifests himself as light, though it is of course the best place where we can easily find out the real nature of the Deva. Similarly there is a Deva for every sound in the universe and all such Devas form but the limbs of a higher Deva who is above all particular sounds and whose nature is mere sound. Though he is present wherever there is a sound of any sort, he is predominantly present in some more than in others, and his real nature can be realised as

near to the reality as possible in a few of his manifestations, the loftiest of them being the holy Pranava. So with other objects.

As there is no object perceivable by the senses of the ear, the skin, the eye, the tongue and the nose which does not share in varying proportions the qualities of Sound, Touch, Light, Taste and Smell, the universe is conceived of as emanations from five primal *things* which are, as already noted, respectively called Akasa, Vayu, Tejas, Apas and Prithvi. These primal *things* are also conceived of as Devas who permeate every object in the universe but are predominantly present in some which therefore assume those very names in a secondary sense. These primal *things* in their turn also come under the class of *things* perceptible; they are therefore parts of and emanations from a still higher *thing* of which we can postulate only that it is perceptible, without limiting that characteristic to the perceptibility by any particular sense. This higher perceptible *thing* is the highest *thing* which one can realise by pursuing the course of training we are now discussing, viz., the second step in the Vedanta. This higher perceptible *thing*, in as much as its perceptibility is not confined to any particular sense and as it is therefore supersensuous and cannot be the *object* of any particular sense, is also called the 'Imperceptible.'

Students of the Vedanta and generally of the system of thought even as popularly expounded in the Puranas, will recognise that by the highest Imperceptible *Thing* we mean the Avyakta seed (Karana) of the universe called Moola or Karana-Prakriti or Maya unmanifest; by the next lower *Thing* which in a condition of subtle, Sukshma, manifestation, permeates even the primal elements of the uni-

verse, we mean the All-pervading Principle with whom begins the primary creation of the Sukshma Universe; and by the next lower *thing* which, in a state of fuller manifestation, comprehends the whole concrete, Sthula, universe composed of secondary elements, we mean the Sthula Cosmic principle. How these *Things* came to be looked upon as many different *Deities*, and how the still lower *Things*, which also in their way permeate wherever their characteristic qualities are to be found, obtained, as indicated above, the name of Devas, are matters which we shall have occasion to refer to in the course of the consideration of the further two steps.

6. Mode of Concentration

Having thus in brief outline sketched the path in which the aspirant has to progress towards a realisation of the single *Thing*, which may with equal truth be called perceptible, as well as imperceptible, we shall consider the several stages in this progress, even if only to see how eminently practical our Vedanta is.

We have already mentioned that, if four distinct things happen to have a single quality in common, we must logically admit that these four things derive that quality-aspect form a higher thing whose nature is *that* quality. If I find a cup of water, a ball of iron, a burning torch and a ray of sunlight all hot, I must deduce that there is a higher thing whose quality is heat and which imparts heat to the water, the iron, the torch and the ray by permeating them and but for which they will never be hot. There are two ways of realising this higher thing of Heat (call it Agni, Aditya or simply Tejas), of which only one is practicable. The impracticable method is that by which we may try to know and experience every thing that is hot and then

arrive at a generalisation by the process of finding out the common factor in all of them. That will be a fool's errand, for there is no limit to the number of hot things in the universe, and even if anybody should make himself acquainted with all of them he cannot certainly know the things that *have been* hot and that *will be* hot. He cannot therefore hope to attain an absolute knowledge of heat. The only practical method is therefore that of the ant that we have already cited as a good example of an intelligent aspirant. Roaming about on the table it found out that the fingers that obstructed its passage were similar to each other and possessed the common quality of animal heat. If it were foolish enough to continue to be roaming on the table itself to find out what other obstructions also shared this quality of heat, it must be still roaming about and be as far away from the realisation of the common hand as at the beginning of its progress. But our ant was not so foolish, It stuck to a single finger to the exclusion of the other fingers till it realised in actual experience the one hand which was common to all the figures. The Vedanta teaches us similarly to stick to a particular manifestation of the higher *thing* which we seek to realise till we actually realise it. We must stick to the higher quality that is present in the particular manifestation before us till we lose cognition of its particularity in a realisation of that higher quality. Have we not heard of robbers melting down the best finished ornaments of exquisite workmanship for the sake of the gold which they value more than the artistic workmanship? The ornament ceases to be an ornament in their eyes as they seek only the gold in it. Any conception of the height of a lamp-post or even of the height of the flame in it will not convey to us an idea of fire or light. These extraneous attributes must be subordinated to the main conception. As

we have repeatedly said, limitation is only in the attributes. We must not import that limitation in the main conception itself. If we see a light burning and want to realise the higher thing called Light which transcends and permeates all limited lights, we must sit down before the burning flame and concentrate our attention and thought upon it and forcibly make ourselves believe that that flame in spite of the limitation is itself the higher light. When we bring to bear upon the flame this forcible conception of the higher light, the volume of the flame, the colour of the flame, the lamp, the wick and the oil will all gradually fade from our cognition as conceptions incompatible with the higher nature so forcibly conceived of by us until finally we realise the Higher Light itself untrammelled by the surrounding attributes though present in the flame before us.

7. Nature of Concentration

We call the concentration we have mentioned *"forcible"* as the natural tendency of us all will revolt against our looking upon a limited object as really unlimited. It may be asked:— Why should we engage ourselves in this difficult process of concentration? Will it not be enough if we realise that the burning flame before us is a *part* of the Higher Light, for by knowing the part we can certainly know the whole? The answer is twofold. There can be, strictly speaking, no *part* of the higher light in any sense of the term. Further, by knowing the part, you can never know the whole. If I see a tiny spark of light before me, I must still call it *light;* I cannot in any sense say that it is any fraction or part of light. Between that spark and a larger flame *as light* there can exist no relation of proportion. The appearance of the one as tiny and of the other as large is due to the relativity that exists in the limitations

of the light and not in the light itself. A light ever so small is still light and can, to repeat again, never be called a fraction of light. Further, even supposing that we can think of the light before us as a part of a higher light, we can have no conception of the higher light if we insist on retaining the *partness* of the light before us; for, if we do, we will never learn to realise the light which can exist without being limited; in other words we will be endowing the higher light itself with a *partness,* though it may be a relatively larger partness. It will therefore be seen that for a realisation of the higher thing we must train ourselves to look upon its particular manifestation as the higher thing itself. That is the principle in all Upasanas. To the Hindu devotee the image before him is not a symbol of his favourite Deity, nor is it a part or fraction of that Deity; that image is the Deity Himself. If you tell him that the image is only a few inches high and ask him "how can it be the Deity Himself who permeates the whole universe?", his simple answer will be "Do you think that the All-Permeating Being is incapable of being present in a limited object" for, his conviction is that, even if the All-Pervading Being manifests Himself in particular forms, the limitation is only in the forms and can never limit the higher Being. An exposition of the details of image-worship will be out of place in this brief sketch, but we may mention that, though *any* particular manifestation of the Higher Being may logically be taken hold of for the practice of the forcible concentration that we have mentioned above, there are some manifestations which are more fitted than others to help the aspirant on to an earlier and easier realisation of the Being—in other words, to make the aspirant forget sooner and with greater facility the limitations that seem to limit that Being. It is the speciality of our Sastras that they select

for us those manifestations. If we want to realise any particular Deity, they prescribe for our concentration on a particular form of that Deity, that form being the most fitted to make us realise our object with the least trouble and with the least delay. So have the Sastras got forms ready for all Deities from the lowest to the highest, even unto the highest, the Supreme Lord Iswara of the Imperceptible or *Avyakta* state.

8. Forms

We think a word of explanation is necessary to fully convey to the reader what we mean by the word 'Form' as applied to the particular manifestation prescribed for realising the Higher Being inherent in and transcending that manifestation. We have indicated that the highest three *things* are, firstly, the 'Imperceptible' thing, secondly the *thing* that by way of a beginning in actual manifestation appears to have brought forth and pervaded everything subtle including the primal elements Akasa, Vayu, Tejas, Apas and Prithvi, and thirdly the *thing* that manifests itself through the secondary or gross elements that go by the same names owing to the preponderance of this element or that. All other *things* are but lower manifestations in more limited aspects of this third *thing*. If we want to realise for instance the All-pervading Principle of the universe we must make our concentration centre round some of the lofty universalising qualities described in the Sastras as of the All-pervading Spiritual Entity, the Great Lord of all *Sukshma* existence, if we are able to do so; if we are not, we must catch hold of even some grosser and more limited manifestations of this Great Pervader. We mention this to show that as long as we retain the sense-perceptiveness in ourselves. we cannot have any object for our concentration which is

free from the primal elements. In other words, if we think of or perceive any manifestation, it must be only in terms of Akasa, Vayu, Tejas, Apas or Prithvi, i.e. the manifestation will make itself perceived in any or all of these respective forms — Sound, Touch, Vision Taste and Smell. Suppose I sit down to concentrate my mind on the Great Lord who pervades the five primal elements of the universe. If I stick to his Sound attribute I can realise him by concentrating on the best sound that can help me to realise him. Such sounds are provided in the Sastras in the shape of Mantras like Ashtakshari and Dvadasakshari. If I stick to his Touch attribute I can realise him by concentrating on the best form of touch that I can conceive of, the soft touch of a child's body, for instance. If I stick to his Vision attribute I can realise him by concentrating on the most beautiful form described in the Sastra as capable of helping me to realise him. Again, if the Taste aspect appeals to me most, I can conceive of him as one holding in his hands, say, fresh sweet butter. I can realise him again if I stick to the best Smell that is competent to make me realise him; such a smell may be the smell of some flowers. But, it goes without saying that it is only a very few aspirants that can realise the Great Lord by concentrating singly on any one of these forms. To most of us who are the slaves of all our senses equally, it will be impossible to concentrate on the Sound aspect without investing even that aspect with a Visual form, or on the Visual aspect without the Touch form and so on. The result is that the Sastras, knowing as they do our weaknesses and our capacities, prescribe for us a composite sensuous form which combines in it all these aspects. One of the most usual forms so prescribed for the realisation of the Lord is that of a tender little boy beautiful to look at, holding fresh sweet butter

in his hand, with a garland of beautiful flowers and lisping sweet music. It will now be clear also that even though the Deity sought to be realised by various aspirants may be the same, the particular aspect of that Deity that may be best fitted for each aspirant will have to vary according to his particular nature and aspiration. That is why the Sastras have had to prescribe so many distinct forms even for the same Deity. To one therefore who believes in the Sastras all forms or aspects will be equally sacred, and he will not attempt to confuse any of them with any other, for he knows that each form, as it is prescribed, is perfect in all its details and that if he should attempt to modify or tamper with such details he will be destroying the competency of that form to help him or another to a realisation of the Deity through that form.

9. Devas not Mythical

Before we close this particular chapter, it may be necessary to mention a word of caution. Though we have considered in the previous pages the higher *Things* and Deities in a progressive scale up to the highest Prakriti and Iswara, all in a theoretical way, we must mention that these are not mythical entities or mere theoritical conceptions, but are actual facts. As fire is a fact as much as a burning torch, so are the Supreme Devas and the lesser Devas all actual facts for us, as real as ourselves, also as phenomenal as ourselves.

10. A Summary

The sum and substance of what we have been trying to make out throughout this portion of the argument may be mentioned briefly as follows:— Each *thing* in the universe derives its power to produce knowledge or enjoyment from a higher *thing* which is inherent in and transcends that

particular *thing* and every other similar *thing*. That higher *thing* again is but a limited aspect of a still higher *thing* and so on. The highest *thing* that we can conceive of must transcend the five senses and therefore be imperceptible. The method by which we can realise the oneness of any particular *thing* with the next higher *thing* or even with the highest *thing* is to forcibly look upon the particular *thing* itself as the higher or highest *thing* until the limitation which invests it with the particularity disappears altogether from our cognition and we realise in actual experience the ideal *thing* untrammelled by such limitation. By following this method we can reach a stage at which whenever we see, we will see only the highest *thing*, whenever we hear, we will hear only that *thing*, whenever we touch, we will touch only that *thing* and so on. The universe will be perceived and enjoyed by us as if it were filled to overflowing only with that Supreme *Thing* (call it 'Thing' or 'Being' as you will) and had no room for any other. Such will be the actual realisation of a true Bhakta. He will cognise the Highest everywhere and always. He will enjoy the Highest everywhere and always. The Highest Supreme will be an eternal and omnipresent object of his cognition and enjoyment. His will be the true bliss and true knowledge. To such a stage can the second step take us. But the Vedanta is not content with even that stage of unlimited knowledge and bliss; it has two more steps for the ardent aspirant. We shall briefly consider them in the succeeding chapters.

CHAPTER XVI

SENSE OF DUTY AND SERVICE

1. PRELIMINARY

The third step towards the realisation of the absolute truth of the Vedanta is, realisation by the aspirant as a matter of direct experience the oneness between his own personality and the Supreme Entity which transcends all limitations. A consideration of this step will have to be on the same lines as were adopted for the previous step. To determine first what elements go to make up the individuality of a *person* as distinct from another *person,* then to find out the means for annihilating these limiting elements and finally to realise the one *Person* who comprehends and transcends all limited *persons* will be the order of the present enquiry.

2. THE END OF THE SECOND STEP

We had occasion to analyse the diverse conceptions that are usually included in the word 'personality' when we were considering even the first step of perfect distinction between *persons* and *things.* We also mentioned that even in the final stage of that step the consciousness of *I*-ness would persist. So long as I am conscious of an *I* in me, I must be prepared to admit an *I* in all other conscious beings, as I am prepared to admit a *this*-ness in all things. By pursuing the path of training, mentioned above as the second step, we were able to reduce this '*this*-ness in all *things,* to a *this*-ness in a single *Thing* comprehending all *things;* in other words, we were able to realise a Single *Thing* as inherent in and transcending all

limited *things*. We have therefore arrived at a stage where there are several *persons* but there is only One Single *Thing* which is the object of their several cognition and enjoyment. We have mentioned already that if any of these persons will clothe that *Thing* with a Name and a Form for purposes of concentration, he will clothe it with such a Name and such a Form as are eminently fitted to facilitate and maintain *his* realisation of the Single *Thing*. We mentioned also that the details of this name and form will have to differ according to the requirements and the mentality of the aspirant. To a looker-on who cannot see the same inner realisation of the Supreme Entity that is being had by any two such aspirants, they may seem to be concentrating on and worshipping distinct forms and distinct names. If the looker-on happens to have greater faith in the fact of such realisation by one of such aspirants, he will be easily led into the mistake of assuming that the Supreme has only that form and that name which are adopted by that particular aspirant, and he may even be tempted to view with contempt or anger the other aspirant or his follower who may claim his own particular name and form for the Supreme. But between the aspirants themselves, who have in fact realised the Supreme beyond any name and any form, there can be really no dispute though they may sometimes think of and talk of the particular manifestation that helped them on to the higher stage of perception. There cannot therefore be any difference in the nature or magnitude of their knowledge or enjoyment for they know and enjoy the same objects. But, as we have said, each of the aspirants will be retaining his own individuality even at that stage. That is just the status assigned to the highest aspirant or *Mukta* in all the systems of philosophy that do not aim at the absolute monism of the Advaitin.

3. The Further Steps

The Advaitin does not recognise a person as perfect so long as he retains this exclusiveness indicated by the sense or consciousness of *I*-nes. In short, according to him, the perfect person must be impersonal. Whether that is possible is the difficult question which the Advaitin makes bold to answer in the affirmative. He recognises the necessity and the usefulness of the first two steps we have hitherto discussed only in as much as they help on the aspirant to reach the third step, viz., the annihilation of the individuality which has made the person appear as the individual. This step and the still further step, where the Transcendent *Person* and the Transcendent *Thing* are realised to be in fact One, are the specialities of the Advaitic doctrine, and it would require no small amount of thought and analysis to follow the severely logical philosophy of the Advaitin here. In this brief sketch, therefore, which is but a popular presentation, we propose to leave aside the metaphysical and the philosophical aspects of this question and proceed, on the basis of those two steps being possible, to discuss the methods prescribed in the Vedanta for realising those steps.

4. How to get over one's Individuality?

While considering the individuality of *things* it was mentioned that if we discard the characteristics which clothe them with that individuality there can remain no distinction between one *thing* and another. So with the *person*. If we discard the characteristics which invest him with a distinct personality, there can remain no distinction between him and another *person*. We will therefore have to see what those distinctive characteristics are and to understand the process of discarding them. These characte-

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ristics are two in number. A person feels his distinctness from another person because of a sense of 'limitedness' in himself. The person feels impelled to relate himself to a *thing* because of a sense of 'incompleteness' in himself. The sense of limitedness is the basic principle of the *I*-ness. The sense of incompleteness is the basic principle of the *my*-ness. We must therefore get rid of these two ideas of limitation and incompleteness if we want to rise above the sense of individuality. While considering the first step, we stated that these two ideas are incompatible with a perfect *person* and that they can be postulated only of the imperfect *person* who by a mistake confuses himself with a *thing* which is really but an instrument of his own perception or enjoyment. The most direct process of getting rid of these ideas is to realise the essence of the *person* as really unlimited and perfect. But, as we have more than once stated, such a process being an up-the-current process is not possible for many of us. The only practical process therefore for us, who are not qualified for that direct method, has to be a with-the-current process:

The sense of *I*-ness or limitedness that makes one *person* seem distinct from another has also a tendency, as we have seen already, to deteriorate into lower forms of identification with *things,* which we have designated the appositional and the possessory. As the final disappearance of the *I* has to depend upon the preliminary training that the aspirant undergoes in getting rid of these lower forms of *I*-ness, we think it better to start from the beginning of the course of training, though in doing so we may have to repeat some thoughts that we may have already discussed in the previous chapters in different contexts.

5. Two Initial Methods: The Higher and the Lower

If I get a sweet smelling fruit, I will at once cover it with a coat of *my*-ness, thereby denying to the fruit the credit of independent existence unrelated to me. Suppose however that as soon as I perceive the desirability in the fruit, but before I import my selfish desire for retaining possession of it, I happen to recollect the existence of my child at home to whom the fruit will be more desirable than to myself. Then, though I may retain the fruit in my hands, I will lose the *my*ness over it, for I have it only for the child and not for myself. Here is a method by which I can get rid of the *my*ness over an object without losing the possession of it. I do that by retaining the possession in my own hands but at the same time substituting some other person as the person to be benefited by the possession instead of myself. The persons that can be so substituted fall under two categories. It would be more accurate to say that such substitution is of two sorts. One will help the aspirant on to a reduction in the *my*-ness. The other will strengthen the sense of *my*-ness. For example, in the illustration we have given above, the sense of *my*-ness over the fruit is subordinated to the stronger sense of *my*-ness in the child; so that, the substitution of the child as the person more fitted than myself to possess the fruit is really due to the strength of my love for the child and not due to any real reduction in my love for the fruit. This therefore cannot positively help the aspirant to lose his *my*-ness, though certainly he will be more advanced than he who would not part with the fruit even for the sake of his own child. The other method is similar to the above in that I need not part with the possession of the fruit, but I relate *myself* to some other person as the object of *his my*-ness. To take again the same example, even though I may retain the fruit in my own

hands. I may think of myself as the possessor of the fruit, not in my personal capacity but *as the father* of my child It may seem at first sight that there is no real distinction between the two kinds of substitution. But the difference between them is really so vast that one will help the aspirant towards the truth and the other will take him away from it. We shall consider them in another form. In the lower method the *my*-ness of the person who is in actual physical possession of the fruit is subordinated to his *my*-ness over the child, so that he retains *my*-ness over the child and the child is given a *my*-ness over the fruit with the result that his *my*-ness actually covers both the child and the child's fruit. It is now clear that his *my*-ness is not really destroyed but only strengthened. The master, who gets a livery made out of his own money, parts with the possession of it to *his* servant; but we know as a matter of experience that the wearing of the livery by the servant only adds to the conceit and pride of the master. In the higher method, the actual possessor of the fruit is related to the child as the object of the latter's *my*-ness, so that even when he retains possession of the fruit, he knows that the child is entitled to the ownership over himself as well as over the object in his possession. The servant however proud he may be for having a livery, his pride and his sense of *my*-ness over it will disappear the moment that he recollects that he himself, his livery included, is at the disposal of the master. In other words, retention of *my-ness* in oneself implies the sense of Right and Domination as in the lower method, while consideration of oneself as the object of *my*-ness in another implies the sense of Duty and Service, as in the higher method.

6. Right and Duty

We may say concisely that the perception of *right* retards the aspirant's progress, while the perception of *duty* helps him on. When we assert a right, we strengthen the feeling of *my*-ness that is already present in us; whenever however we feel a duty, we slacken that feeling of *my*-ness. If we think of our rights as a son, as a husband, as a father and so on, we will be only strengthening our sense of selfishness; if however we feel our duties as a son, as a husband, as a father and so on, we will be minimising our sense of selfishness. The Sastras therefore, intended as they are for the advancement of the aspirant, do not trouble themselves with any rights but only prescribe and regulate the duties. By performing these duties we will be relating ourselves and the things in our possession to some other person as the objects of his possession. But a meek husband may claim to be an aspirant in the right road of progress, for he will be quite prepared to admit that he has long since lost any individuality of his own and that himself and everything with him are actually possessed and lorded over by his wife. The answer to his claim will be:— "No, Sir. The fact that you are ruled actually by your wife will not give you the status of an aspirant, for you will be allowing that rule to continue only so long as you do not have the strength and the opportunity to shake it off. You submit to it not because you feel it your duty but only because you are weak". If such a fallacious claim were to be allowed, I may claim to have conquered the sense of *my*-ness in my body when I 'permit' its rolling down a flight of steps owing to a slip of the foot. The method we are considering therefore consists in the *conscious voluntary submission to duty* to some other person. As the aspirant has to relinquish the idea "this is mine" by substituting for it the idea

"I and everything with me are thine", the aspirant has to be very careful in selecting the "some other persons" to whom he so dedicates himself. The Acharya, the father, the mother and other such persons are the ones usually prescribed for such dedication during the initial stages of the training. Without violating the value of such training, other persons called Devas, Rishis and Pitris are also prescribed as suitable ones for such dedication. The most suitable and the highest of persons to whom such a dedication can be made is of course the Supreme Paramatma. More about 'Dedication' will be mentioned in the next chapter.

To a careful reader of the above, it will be apparent that, while we considered the aspirant as the *person* and every other entity, from the tiniest object of perception up to the highest perceptible Godhead, as *things* during the second step, we have now reversed the process by making others than the aspirant *persons* and by making the aspirant a *thing*, as it were, to be possessed by those others. That this is the right aspect in which we must view the aspirant will be clear as we proceed.

CHAPTER XVII

DEDICATION AND UNIFICATION

1. FOUR STAGES

The practical course of training that we have been considering may be classified in four stages:—

(1) This thing (Individuality included) is myself.

(2) This thing is mine.

(3) This thing is thine.

(4) This thing is thyself.

A full realisation of this fourth or last stage alone in its highest aspect is, properly speaking, the ideal of the third step now under consideration. But to explain the nature of that realisation, we have to refer to the previous stages also, though briefly.

2. THE SENSE OF 'I'

(1) The first stage of identification with the thing is the most normal of stages and will need therefore no explanation. My child is myself when *I* am grieved if the child is hurt. My body is myself when I say that *I* walk. My eye is myself when I say *I* see. My other senses also are myself when I say *I* hear, *I* smell etc. My mind is myself when I say *I* think. A little more detachment and a little more perception of the true relationship between the thing and myself will take me on to the second stage.

3. THE SENSE OF 'MINE'

(2) In the second stage of training, I will realise that it is *my* child that is hurt, that it is *my* body that walks,

that it is *my* eye that sees, that it is *my* mind that thinks and so on. That is, I will realise that these things are at my disposal, to use them or not at my will, to use them for my benefit or for my harm. This sense of *my*ness in these things is an important advance on the sense of *I*ness in them. When the *I*ness is in the ascendant, it will be impossible to detect the blemishes in the thing so identified, say for instance, the body itself. This explains why every animal is instinctively enamoured of its own body, however filthy or diseased it may be. Man himself is not free from this instinct. No one will be willing to exchange his body for another until he realises that the body is only a convenient instrument for obtaining knowledge or pleasure. The moment this sense arises in him, he will become careful about his body, for he will know that the better he keeps the body the better will it serve him as an instrument. So will he try to keep every thing that he looks upon as *his,* as neat and as pure as possible so that he may get the maximum benefit out of it. The man in this second stage will therefore practise purity in every aspect of his life and in relation to everything that is *his,* from the smallest object of his possession up to the subtlest—the mind,. It is for him that the various Acharas for the body, the several kinds of Tapas, like self-control for the senses and the several forms of Upasana or devotional concentration for the mind are prescribed by the Sastras. We need not say that it follows as a corollary of what we have stated above that if the aspirant identifies himself with the senses and looks upon the body as his, he will not seek to purify the senses but will stop with bodily cleanliness; if he identifies himself with the mind but looks upon the senses as his, he will not seek to purify the mind but will see that his senses come in contact only with attractive things. It is only to the

man who identifies himself with the supra-mind that the course of purification of the mind will be a possible one.

4. Necessity for Dedication

(3) Throughout the second stage above considered, the sense of 'mine' is persistent, and if we purify the things from the mind downwards we do it solely that we may perceive better, enjoy better. The root of desire is still in us; and it is only for the satisfaction of that desire that we take the trouble of making the instruments more competent. That is why even some people engaged in the most scrupulous observance of Sastraic Karmas and even some of the great Yogis, who take to the practice of yoga for developing the powers of the mind and the senses, are not free from selfish desire. In fact, they will be found to be more selfish than others who will be satisfied with lesser objects of pleasure that can be enjoyed by their imperfect minds and senses. The requisite moral elevation qualifying the aspirant for further progress towards a realisation of the ultimate truth has to be got only by a practice of the subsidiary stage of "This is thine" that we are now considering. We have already mentioned that this is the stage of what we may call *dedication*.

5. The Sense of 'Thine'

If we get any thing which strikes us as desirable, we must learn to realise that that thing really belongs to another and that it is given to us temporarily, not that we may use or abuse it as we like, but only to see whether we are worthy of being entrusted with that thing. If this feeling of trust for another enters us, we will put the thing to the best use possible so that we may, by our careful discharging of the present trust, please the other person, who

will be moved to renew the trust, or favour us with the trust of a higher and more valuable object. The other person will be like a father who will place a small amount of money at the disposal of his son to see whether he can be entrusted with further sums or with more important trusts. In this process, the other person who is credited with the ownership of the thing must also be possessed of the power to reward us or to punish us, as the case may be. Such persons are, as we have already mentioned, the Acharyas, the parents and such like in this world. The Devas also come under this class of persons. For every object of cognition or of enjoyment there is an owner who is a Deva. It is through *his* grace that we obtain that object; it is through *his* will that we lose it. That object is *his;* he will allow us to have the temporary use of it, if he is pleased with our conduct; he will refuse us that use if he is displeased with us.

6. The Devas Again

The physical body is composed of various substances; each one of these substances belongs to another person—a Deva; if we propitiate him our blood will get purer, the diseases will leave our body, our breath will become regular and so on; if we displease him, our blood will be poisoned, our body will be infested with diseases, our breath will be irregular and so on. The minuter the analysis of the body, the greater will be the number of Devas of whom we have to take note. There is a Deva for every organ, for every function, for every limb and even for every disease. In fact, as we have said, the whole of the body will be found to have been exhaustively partitioned among the Devas leaving nothing that *we* can call exclusively *our* own. So with the senses. For example, I feel that it is *my*

eye that sees. I must learn to realise that the eye or the power of vision is not really mine absolutely but is given to me by its real owner provisionally and temporarily. If I cannot see properly without the aid of spectacles, a friend may oblige me by lending his. When I wear them I can see well; but I must not forget that the spectacles are his and that I must be responsible for their safe keeping and proper use. Such must be the attitude towards the senses. If that attitude is secured, I will be careful about using them properly and for proper purposes for fear that the owner may not lend their use if I misuse the present trust. Such an owner who owns the eyes of us all and at whose pleasure alone we can have the power of vision is a Deva. He is ordinarily called Aditya. (We shall explain later on, how it is that the *Person* who owns the eyes of us all and wields the power of vision and the *Thing* that pervades all visible things and makes them visible both happen to have the same name). As with the eye so with the other senses. There is a Deva presiding over and owning each one of the functions, the powers of hearing, tasting, smelling or feeling touch or of locomotion, assimilation, excretion and so forth. All these functions are subordinate to the principle of Life in us. All these Devas therefore are but particular aspects of, or are subordinate to, a higher Deva who owns the principle of Life in us all. That higher Deva is called Prana. If we propitiate him by a realisation that we live, we function only because of him and solely through his grace and that he might, if he willed, withdraw from us at any moment the sacred life that we ordinarily call ours, we will live long and healthy and can function with the senses and the body to an extent which may seem to the ordinary man miraculous. To the higher aspirant who realises that his life itself is a means vouchsafed to him for the betterment

of his mind, the regulation of life in all its activities with a view to keep it pure and competent enough to benefit the mind will be necessary. He will not allow one breath of his to be wasted. He will be very sparing about the use of his breath. He will know that unnecessary talking, unnecessary eating and similar things tend to take away his life by demanding waste of energy. He will therefore practise the control of breath called Pranayama; he will observe silence as far as possible; he will eat only when it is necessary and will undergo similar kinds of training to make of this Prana a better instrument for the benefit of the mind.

7. The Highest Devas

There is a still higher aspirant who knows that the mind itself is but an instrument. To get himself rid of the *my*ness over the mind, he must dedicate it to a Deva who owns all the minds in the universe. If he does that, he will realise that every thought that arises in him is not of his own making but is due to the inspiration and power of that Deva who presides over and rules his mind. Man cannot conceive of any conscious action unless the idea of doing it first arises in his mind. Therefore the mind can be considered as the fountain-head of all activities. This Deva who owns the mind of the aspirant and of every other person may be conceived of as the source and the owner and controller of every thought and of every activity in this universe. Such a Deva who is within the mind of all ,who is its inmost prompter, cannot be any other than the Great Lord All-pervader Himself. None of us can think or act if not for His grace. As our minds are His and are only lent to us for temporary use during the period of our good behaviour, we must keep our minds ever pure and use our

minds only in the pursuit of good aims. The regulation of thought and the concentration of thought are together the function of the course of Upasana, as taught in the Sastras. Higher than the mind itself is the *I*-consciousness which uses the mind as an instrument for deriving Jnana. By an analysis of the state of the dreamless sleep we are able to experience a state where the mind as such does not exist, but where, all the same, we are able to experience a sort of supersensuous and supermental happiness. A discussion of that state, to show that the experience had therein is not merely negative but really positive, may take us far away from the subject on hand. We must therefore ask the reader to concede that the Vedantin is correct in his analysis of that state as a state of positive experience. The instrument for obtaining this experience is called the *I*-consciousness. To get rid of the *my*ness even in that instrument we must dedicate it to a Deva who presides over and owns the *I*-consciousness in all of us. Such a Deva is called *Isvara*. We must realise that our existence as individuals is due only to His grace and that our further progress depends upon the account we submit to Him about our use of the *I*-consciousness entrusted to us. There is no instrument higher than the *I*-consciousness. The course of training *This is thine* can take us only thus far. In following this course the aspirant dedicates whatever is seen to be his so that he alone may remain in his true absolute essence.

8. The Sense of 'Thou'

(4) The higher stage is, it will be remembered, where the aspirant has to realise *This is thyself*. As this stage will be similar to what we have considered in chapter XV about the forcible concentration of the higher *thing* in the more limited, we do not think we need tarry long over this. For

example, instead of realising that my eye is Aditya's I must learn to realise that my eye is Aditya himself. That is, I must realise that my eye is only a limitation, a manifestation of Aditya, the owner and pervader of all eyes and that this limitation cannot really limit Aditya himself. To realise this, I must practise the course of forcible concentration by saying to myself that the eye is Aditya until the limitation by the eye gradually drops out and I am able to realise Aditya in his unlimited glory. So can I realise that my mind is not merely under the power and the ownership of the All-pervading Lord but that it is Himself. To do that, I must concentrate on my mind with the persistent thought that it is really the unlimited All-Pervader Himself until the mind loses its finiteness and becomes merged in that Deva. Similarly, to realise that the *I*-consciousness is Isvara Himself and not merely due to Him, I must concentrate on the *I* in me until the *I* disappears and merges in the Universal *I* called Isvara. This again has to be done only by the forcible concentration on the *I* in me as really transcending the particular *I*, but including the *I* in every being in this universe. This is the highest of Upasanas and naturally the most difficult. It may seem at first sight that there can be no stage higher than the disappearance of the *I* in the universal *I*, for all the characteristics, the external things, the body, the senses, the mind and even the *I* consciousness which were responsible for the individuality of the person have now been taken away from him and there is nothing to characterise him as an individual person. He has reached the stage when he can boldly and without any fear of untruth proclaim that all beings exist in him and because of him and that he resides in all of them and ensouls them, for he has realised the oneness of his own personality with that of the Supreme Entity that comprehends and transcends

all individual personalities. But the Advaitin with his merciless logic is not content with even such a lofty state of existence and must needs postulate a still higher state, the subject-matter of the fourth step, namely, the realisation of the absolute oneness and reality of the Supreme Entity alone that can in no manner be said to be *related* (even by way of transcendence) to *persons* or *things* whose reality *as such* can be only relative and not absolute.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE REALISATION OF THE SUPREME

1. INTRODUCTION

We shall now proceed to consider the fourth or the highest step. As we are infinitely behind such a step, we shall be merely wasting our energy if we seek to have a full idea of the glory of the step or even of the means of reaching it. We shall therefore be very brief in considering it. We cannot leave it untouched as it is the crowning step and as all the other steps are only intended as preliminary to it. A superficial survey of this step is also necessary to make us understand how our Sastras, for which some among us have so much contempt now, have significantly provided in each activity prescribed by them some element from out of each of all the four steps, so that the same activity which will secure wealth to one, will purify the body of another, will purify the mind of another, will make another aspirant realise an humble Deva or the highest Supreme, will destroy the *my*ness of another aspirant, the *I*-ness of still another and so on.

2. AN EXAMPLE OF LIMITATION

To understand the exact nature of this highest step, it will be useful to consider a familiar example of limitation. Electricity is an intangible power which may manifest itself in several ways. Let us take one of such manifestations, the electric spark. The electric spark comes into existence the moment two electrified knobs come into close contact. The two knobs to be qualified to bring the spark into existence

have to be invested with distinct characteristics. It will not be sufficient if the knobs are electrified in the same way. One of the knobs will have to be electrified 'positively', the other 'negatively'. Electricity which pervades both the knobs and the interspace between them has therefore to split itself into three forms to make itself felt. It must appear in one knob as positive, in the other as negative and in the interspace as the spark. The knobs and the spark are all electrified, but the spark cannot be visible until this splitting process is secured. To understand therefore the true nature of electricity proper, unconfined to its spark-aspect, we must realise that the positivity in one knob, negativity in the other and the sparkness in the interspace are all but limitations and that electricity is the power which pervades all these three and is unlimited by them.

3. Limitation threefold

The Vedanta tells us that every knowledge and every enjoyment is just like the electric spark we have now considered. As the spark cannot be produced without investing the knob on the one side with positivity and the knob on the other side with negativity, so any knowledge or enjoyment cannot arise without investing the two entities on either side of it with the characteristics of activity and passivity. The instant that the phenomenon of sight comes into existence, there is an entity clothed with the quality of active sight and there is another clothed with the quality of passive sight; the eye which is at one end of sight becomes the seer, the object which is at the other end of sight becomes the seen. Like electricity which pervades all positive knobs, all negative knobs and all sparks, there is Sight Supreme which pervades all seers, all seens and all particular sights. It may now be clear why the Sastras give the same name Aditya

to the pervader of all seers as well as the pervader of all seens. So with every particular knowledge. No particular knowledge can ever arise unless at the same time a particular knower and a particular known are also brought into existence. That is, no knowledge can arise without a *person* on the one side and a *thing* on the other side. The *person* that knows, the *thing*, that is known and the knowledge that arises from their close contact are all aspects of a Higher Essence which splits itself into these three forms of limitation just as the positivity of the one knob, the negativity of the other and the sparkness of the connecting space are aspects of the higher electricity. The Higher Essence therefore ought to be such as may split itself into the Highest *Person*, the Highest *Thing* and the Highest Knowledge when it purports to manifest itself. We have mentioned, during the consideration of the second and the third steps, that the Highest *Person* is Isvara who resides in every one of us as the *I* and that the Highest *Thing* is the Imperceptible Avyakta Maya that permeates all things as *this*. We have also mentioned that all knowledge is the result of the contact between the *I* and the *this*. The Supreme Essence therefore transcends the highest *I* or Isvara and the highest *This* or Maya. It is the realisation of such an Essence that is the Ideal of the Vedanta. Such an essence is called simply *Chit*, or Supreme Consciousness.

4. Nature of the Supreme

As with knowledge, so with enjoyment. The instant that we conceive of an enjoyment, we bring into existence an enjoyer as well as an object of enjoyment. The abstract power of enjoyment transcends all these limitations. The Highest Enjoyer and the highest object of enjoyment being Isvara and Maya, the Supreme Essence transcending both

of them can only be called *Ananda* or Absolute Bliss. As such an essence is the only Existent Reality which imparts the appearance of reality to every other limited thing, it is also called *Sat* or Eternal Existence. It is therefore usual to characterise this Supreme Essence as *Sat-Chit-Ananda.* It must not be supposed however that these epithets signify any characteristics of that Essence to distinguish it from any other entity which has other characteristics for as we have seen in the course of our considerations so far, we have reduced every entity to that Supreme Essence and found that none else can exist with it or without it.

5. Relative Value of the Steps

Now we have finished with the consideration of the four steps in the realisation of the Absolute Truth of the monism of Vedanta. But, before we close, a word of explanation is due from us. We must not allow it to be supposed that these four steps are altogether separate from one another in the sense that only if we have fully traversed the first step will we be qualified to tread on the second and so on. One step is higher than the other only in the sense that the highest goal that can be reached in that step is higher than what can be reached in the other; the mentality or qualification that is required of the aspirant in these several steps is also different. Each step therefore will seem the highest if the aspirant is qualified only for that step and not for the others. The Sastras do not make any difference in the means prescribed for it. To cut a rope, to sharpen a pencil or to wound a foe, the same knife may be useful. The knife is fitted for all these, and it is left to us to make proper use of it. The Sastras similarly prescribe, say, a Mantra. The Sastras will also mention that if we concentrate on that Mantra, for instance the Gayatri Mantra, our eyes will get

brighter, our mind will get purer, we will realise the nature of the Solar Orb, we will realise the Deva who owns even that orb, we will realise the Antaryami who rules even that Deva, we will realise that that Antaryami resides even in ourselves and we will realise the Highest Essence. To the man who wants only brighter eyes all the other promises are superfluous and meaningless, and if he takes to the Mantra it is only for the brighter eyes and not for the other benefits. It is certainly no fault of the Mantra that it does not give him salvation all at once. If a beggar bawls at my door pronouncing the name of God ever so loudly but only with the motive that I may hear him better and hasten to him with the alms that he requires, we cannot blame God for not responding to his call. The Sastras can only provide the means and indicate the several goals to which the means will lead us. If we are satisfied with the lesser goal we must thank only ourselves. There is another Mantra which may be translated "That Aditya is Brahman". The word 'That' is used only to signify things at a distance from the person pronouncing it. We may therefore take it that, when I pronounce the word 'That' with my hands extended towards the sun, I may rightly be said to be in the first step of realisation of the *Person* in me and of the *thing* in the sun. The next word Aditya, which rightly applies only to the pervader and owner of the Solar Orb, must take my thought away from and behind the luminous thing before me to the higher being called Aditya. The word Brahman placed side by side with the words 'That' and 'Aditya' must lead me away even from the contemplation of the Aditya-Deva and take me to a realisation of the Supreme Being that I can call 'That' 'the Supreme'. The Sastras, fearing that I might stop with realising that Supreme Being as but the *object* of my contemplation, want to

make me realise that that Being is not distinct from mine own essence. The Sastras enjoin therefore that, while pronouncing the Word 'Brahman' I should point my hands, not towards the external Aditya, but towards *my own heart*.

6. Faith Again

But nowadays who cares to trouble himself to understand the significance of this or of any Mantra or of the gestures that have to accompany the recitation of Mantras? Mantras are all trash; gestures are all pantomine. Such is the modern attitude. It is no wonder therefore that the Sastric injunctions seem to be losing their efficacy. Even the doctor requires confidence and faith of the patient before he can cure him. The subtlest of diseases is the *I*-ness in us, and will not the Doctor of Doctors—Isvara—expect us to have faith and confidence in His teachings if we expect Him to cure us of that disease? Let us once get that faith; He will take charge of us, rid us of our faults, lead us step by step even unto His own seat and put us all on the way to still higher glories, higher even than His own.

PEACE BE TO ALL!

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